

STARS AND STRIPES®

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\$50,000
to clone cat**
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Little Nicky

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feels holiday
mail crunch**
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Steelers top
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Eagles QB Donovan McNabb

Volume 63, No.251 © SS 2004 G

FRIDAY - SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24 - 25, 2004

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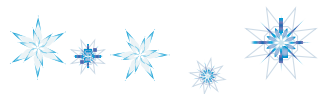
Bomber in Mosul likely wore Iraqi military uniform

U.S. investigating how attack was carried out on base Page 5



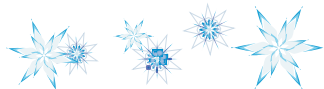
THE PADUCAH (KY.) SUN/AP

In Golconda, Ill., kids slide down a neighborhood slope Wednesday after the winter's first snowfall.



Across U.S.,
frosty weather
brings snow, fun,
travel headaches

Page 8



**To our readers:
Stars and Stripes will not
be printed on Christmas
Day. Look for the next
edition on Dec. 26.**

STARS & STRIPES

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Scene on Sunday

2004 was year of
wacky and tacky

Scene on Sunday

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

Nation

Eric Rudolph case: A judge has ordered the government to show serial bombing suspect Eric Rudolph's defense any bomb replicas or sketches that it plans to use in his federal death penalty trial.

U.S. Magistrate Judge T. Michael Putnam, ruling on a series of defense motions Tuesday, said the government would not have to produce any bomb replicas or mock-ups that were put together in the investigation and were not "final" versions.

Rudolph's federal death penalty trial in the bombing is scheduled next year. He also is charged in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics bombing that killed a woman and two other blasts in Atlanta in 1997.

Blake trial testimony: Robert Blake laughed and smiled as he dined with his wife the night she was shot, the restaurant's owner testified at the "Baretta" star's murder trial.

Bonny Lee Bakley was shot May 4, 2001, after dining at Vitello's restaurant. Blake maintains he left Bakley in the car to go back into Vitello's to retrieve a handgun he carried for protection and returned to find her bleeding.

A doctor testified he heard the actor calling out that his wife was bleeding and needed help, but said it did not offer assistance because he thought Blake's cries were insincere.

Tobacco payments: A tobacco-quota buy-out approved by Congress this year releases cigarette companies from making payments to farmers in 14 states that had been required by a landmark 1998 settlement, a North Carolina judge ruled Wednesday.

The millions of dollars in Phase Two payments have compensated tobacco growers for losses they were expected to suffer under higher cigarette prices resulting from the agreement between tobacco companies and the states.

Cigarette companies contend they were not obligated to make a final \$189 million payment this month to farmers because Congress approved a \$10.1 billion tobacco buy-out this fall. North Carolina Business Court Judge Ben Tennille agreed and also ruled that the companies should get a refund on payments made earlier this year.

Priest shot by accuser: A priest facing trial next month for allegedly molesting a former altar boy who later shot him dead has been defrocked by Pope John Paul II. The Associated Press has learned.

Maurice Blackwell, 58, is scheduled to go on trial Jan. 3 on four counts of child sexual abuse against Donice Stokes.

Blackwell was shot by Stokes in May 2002, in the midst of the national scandal involving Catholic priests. In the aftermath, Baltimore prosecutors reviewed Stokes' allegations and charged the priest with molesting Stokes.

He served a sentence of home detention.



El Gordo Christmas lottery: Cristobal Ortega, center, owner of a bar in Lorca, Spain, celebrates Wednesday after he and several of his customers won a part of the top prize of Spain's El Gordo (Fat One) Christmas lottery, the richest in the world, with the number 54600. The Gordo uses a complex system of shared numbers that divides wealth among millions of people holding numbers that go from 00001 to 66000.

Military

Raptor crash: An Air Force general said that he expects the F/A-22 Raptor to join combat operations by the end of next year despite this week's crash of one of the next-generation stealth fighter jets.

"We're going to keep right on going," Maj. Gen. Stephen M. Goldfein, the Air Warfare Center commander at Nellis, where the approximately \$133 million jet went down on a runway shortly after takeoff Monday.

The pilot suffered scrapes but was otherwise unharmed.

War on terrorism

Soldier charged: A judge on Wednesday ordered a soldier, his wife and her cousin to stand trial in an alleged plot to keep the enlisted man out of Iraq by shooting him in the leg.

Prosecutors said Army Spc. Marquise J. Roberts, his wife, Donna Roberts; and her cousin, Roland Fuller, had originally planned to find someone else to undertake the shooting but decided to do it themselves when they got no takers.

Marquise Roberts, 23, a supply specialist who had spent seven months in Iraq, was distraught about having to return to combat

and wanted to stay with his family, authorities said.

Military officials have said that Roberts could face military discipline if the charges prove to be true.

World

Spain bombings complaint: The Islamic Commission of Spain has asked the parliamentary panel probing the Madrid train bombings to refrain from referring to terrorists as "Islamic" or "Islamist," the leading daily El Pais said Thursday.

Unfortunately, [these terms] are used too frequently in political, journalistic and editorial circles, almost on a daily basis, creating a public opinion of racial, anti-Islamic alarm," the group's leader Sia Tati said in a letter sent to the parliamentary commission.

He said several Muslims, including an imam, were killed in the March 11 attacks.

Ireland bank robbery: The outlawed Irish Republican Army denied involvement Thursday in this week's massive raid on the Northern Bank in Belfast.

In a message issued to Belfast media, the IRA said its members played no role in Monday's robbery, when a large and well-organized gang stole more than 22 million pounds from the bank's main underground vault.

Stories and photos from wire services

Notes to readers

■ The Dec. 26 edition of the paper will be late for readers in Italy and Turkey due to the holiday closure of the Italy printer. Stars and Stripes regrets the inconvenience.

■ Tom Philpott's "Military Update" column will not be in this edition. It will appear in the Dec. 26 edition instead.



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Promotion tracks split for Reserve and Guard

BY LISA BURGESS

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Reserve and National Guard officers will soon have separate promotion tracks instead of competing against one another.

Beginning in January, the Army will have three separate promotion categories for reserve component officers: a list for Army Reserve officers, a list for Army National Guard officers and a third list for Army Reserve officers assigned to active duty, said Lt. Col. Wanda Walker, a personnel policy

integrator for reserve component promotions.

The old Army Promotion List grouped together all Guard and Reserve officers except for chaplains and Army Medical Department officers, who have their own promotion systems, according to Army personnel officials.

But that system led to a disproportionate promotion selection rate for the Army's 3,500 Reserve officers who are assigned to active duty status, about 90 percent, as compared to their regular Reserve and National Guard brethren, who have been pro-

moted in the 70 percent to 80 percent range, Walker said Wednesday.

The number of Reserve officers who can be assigned to active duty is capped by Congress.

Although some Army personnel officials said the old system worked well because "the best-quality officers were getting promoted... basically, the system wasn't fair," Walker said.

That's because Reserve and Guard officers who may work only a few weeks each year were being compared to officers who do their jobs full-time, she said.

The new system, however, "will level the playing field," because officers "will be looked at against the same kinds of officers," Walker said.

Once the changes to the promotion system for the larger groups of reserve component officers is up and running, personnel officials plan to institute a similar system for reserve component chaplains and Medical Department officers.

The plan is to start the new promotion system starting in fiscal 2006, or next October.

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Christmas tradition remembers pre-Bulge Mass

WWII service was last one for many of 300 American soldiers attending

BY KEVIN DOUGHERTY

Stars and Stripes

MAASTRICHT, Netherlands — Written in charcoal, the names on the wall grip a visitor the same way the vise of war led 300 U.S. Army soldiers to squeeze into a cave on a cold winter night six decades ago.

Charmed by the Christ child and all too anxious to pray for peace, they gathered in a cave behind a monastery for a candlelight Mass on Christmas Eve. They met in the cave because it was safe from shelling, and the sounds of war couldn't be heard. When the service ended, they grabbed a piece of black charcoal and scrawled their names on the white rock wall.

Many were kids, about to return to the front and not sure what was waiting for them around the bend.

"I can't imagine what their thoughts were during that service; they were so far from home," said Lt. Col. J.G.M. van der Krabben, a Dutch air force Catholic chaplain. "There were a lot of questions in their minds."

Van der Krabben spoke of the "darkness of the cave, but also of the darkness of their future."

In that dimly lit cave in southern Netherlands, with war on the horizon, they sought the light of Christmas, and all its promise.

Years later, others follow their footsteps into the cave on Christmas Eve, creating a growing and enduring tradition that is as heartfelt as it is humbling.

The tradition dates to at least 1980, and this year will be no different. On Friday, there will be a 7:30 p.m. candlelight Mass celebrated by van der Krabben and U.S. Army Lt. Col. Scott Borderud, a Protestant chaplain for the 25th Base Support Battalion in nearby Schinnen.

Borderud called it an honor to celebrate the Mass for a second

time and said the service illuminated "the strength and the depth of the Dutch memory of how America liberated them in 1944-45."

On Christmas Eve 1944, the men who assembled in the cave knew they would soon leave Maastricht — a rest and recuperation stop as well as a logistics hub — to fight in what would become known as the Battle of the Bulge. Adolf Hitler's massive counteroffensive in the Ardennes necessitated a response, and most of the 950 soldiers in the city soon returned to the front.

The troops were joined in the cave by a contingent of 42 monks. Twelve were part of the service and 30 sang as a choir. In an interview recorded before his death, a Dutch monk by the name of van Grinsven recalled that night.

"We drove up that silent road upon the hill that led to the cave," said van Grinsven, a member of the choir. "The soldiers were already present. They looked a little bit strange to me. Not the way I imagined them to be. I was surprised that these rough men could be so pious."

"The Mass was very moving. I couldn't understand their language, yet I could somehow read their thoughts, their faces: 'Who's going to survive? This might be my last Christmas.'"

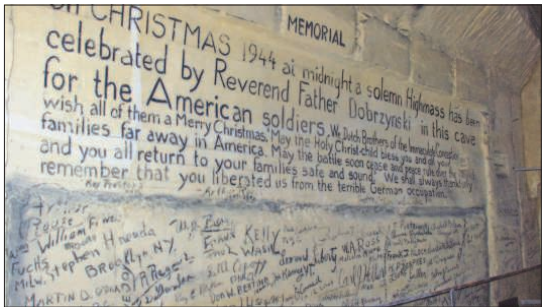
For far too many, it was. Of the 300 soldiers who attended the service, only 50 were alive when the war ended 4½ months later. Even the Catholic priest from New York

who celebrated the Mass died in combat.

Today, only 17 of 300 GIs who attended the Mass are alive.

"The people here are still very thankful of the Americans," said Nito-Alphonse Brill, chairman of a local nonprofit Dutch foundation that runs the event.

Of primary concern to the foundation is the preservation of the



PHOTOS BY KEVIN DOUGHERTY/Stars and Stripes

Above: On Christmas Eve 1944, a Mass was celebrated for 300 U.S. Army troops about to leave Maastricht, Netherlands, for the Battle of the Bulge. After the Christmas Eve Mass, each of the men wrote his name in charcoal on a cave wall. Now, local residents and Americans gather to celebrate a Mass in their honor.

Below: This year, the Mass will be celebrated by two military chaplains: U.S. Army Lt. Col. Scott Borderud, left, and Dutch air force Lt. Col. J.G.M. van der Krabben.

wall with the soldiers' names. The wall, near the altar, now has a protective shield in front of it.

The donation of 5 euros per ticket for the service is "purely for the preservation of the monument, the signatures," said Rita Hoefnagels, one of the Dutch organizers. The wall "is where it all started."

The chances of getting into Friday's service are nil. That's because what began as a Dutch display of gratitude has developed into a major holiday event, one that can only accommodate 300 people because of the size of the cave and the symbolism of that number.

Tickets are available annually starting in November, said Hoefnagels, who is also a 24th BSB spokeswoman. The public affairs office distributes the BSB's allotment on a first-come basis. The community gets roughly half of the tickets with the rest going to the foundation.

The foundation is also raising donations to renovate the site, one that grows more precious each Christmas season.

"It's a piece of our history," said van der Krabben, the Dutch chaplain, "and it's a message to us that we should believe in peace for all mankind."

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Mail room madness

Leighton Barracks post office receiving Christmas packages along with influx of 1st ID gear from Iraq

BY STEVE LIEWER
Stars and Stripes

WÜRZBURG, Germany — For Mark Altherr and the folks in the Leighton Barracks community mail room, the long holiday crunch has just begun.

Besides the annual avalanche of Christmas packages, the Leighton mail room has been getting dozens of bulky black footlockers full of gear that troops in Iraq are shipping back as the Würzburg-based 1st Infantry Division and 67th Combat Support Hospital prepare to return to Germany.

The holiday bundles may decline after this weekend, but Altherr, the chief mail clerk, expects extra packages from Iraq to more than make up for the difference. The same will hold true at other bases heavily populated with returning 1st ID troops in places like Kitzingen, Schweinfurt, Bamberg, Katterbach and Vilseck.

"At least through March, we'll probably have as much [mail] as we normally have at Christmas," Altherr said.

The yearlong deployment, which began last February, has enormously complicated mail service. When the troops are home, the job is straightforward: handle the incoming mail, and hand it out to customers.

Now it's more complex. Some incoming mail must be forwarded to deployed soldiers, while other mail is shipped to families in the States.

Some is held in the mail room's little backshop area. As the Middle East tour nears its end, more packages are coming in from both Iraq and the United States, so, as soldiers and families ship goods back home.

For some of the 11 civilians and three soldiers working in the mail room, getting the mail to and from Iraq is more than a job. It's personal.

Four of them — Altherr, Duane Warnke, George Cortes and Cammie McDonald — have spouses serving downrange.

"Everything is close to home for me. Every letter belongs to a person," said Altherr, whose wife, Maj. Catherine Altherr, works on the 2nd Brigade staff.

"They're not here, but they're not forgotten."

Through it all, they maintain a dogged good cheer that is far from the surly stereotype of postal workers. On Christmas Eve, they plan to stay open into the evening until all customers who want to have picked up their packages.

"I have never dealt with a post office where every single person behind the counter is so nice," said Deborah Davis, a military wife for 18 years. "They help you take your packages out to the car. And you don't have to ask."

Some of the new workers signed up because they heard the mail room was a fun place to work.

"I come in half an hour early every day. The atmosphere is great," said Garrison Pollard, who joined the staff in November.

"It's probably been the best part of my deployment," said Sgt. Heather Lopez, an Army reservist who has served the last three months of a one-year Germany tour in the mail room. "Everybody works really hard and gets the job done."

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STEVE LIEWER/Stars and Stripes

Garrison Pollard stacks boxes and footlockers in the community mail room at Leighton Barracks in Würzburg, Germany. The yearlong deployment of the Würzburg-based 1st Infantry Division has boosted mail volume — especially now that the troops are shipping personal items home before their return.

Ex-Air Force lawyer gets more punishment

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Air Force's recently dismissed top military lawyer was reprimanded further Wednesday and ordered to forfeit some of his pay for carrying on inappropriate relationships and committing other violations of the military code.

Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Fiscus was cited for conduct unbecoming an officer, fraternization, obstruction of justice and violating a lawful general regulation, the Air Force said in a statement. He was punished outside of the court-martial process.

"The swift and strong actions of Air Force leadership make it clear that such misconduct will not be tolerated, regardless of the rank of the officer," the statement said.

An Air Force official who would speak only on condition

of anonymity said an investigation determined Fiscus conducted this series of relationships, some of which were sexual, with women over several years. Some involved subordinates, leading to the fraternization charge, the official said.

Fiscus plans to retire. Gen. Donald G. Cook, the commander of the Air Education and Training Command, who was given responsibility for the Fiscus case, recommended Fiscus retire below his current rank, meaning he could lose some retirement benefits. His status as an attorney may also face review.

Fiscus, an Air Force Academy graduate, had been the service's judge advocate general since February 2002. He had about 1,600 lawyers under his command.

He was relieved, at his request, on Sept. 22, when the investigation into his conduct began.

from San Diego, was eating with other soldiers from her unit in the dining facility at Camp Doha, Kuwait, when the incident occurred. The release said she saw the man — later identified as Lonnie Allen, a DOD civilian working at Camp Doha — sitting near the end of her table and having difficulty breathing.

Study: Iraqi forces unable to operate on own until 2006

BY WALTER PINCUS
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Pentagon figures show that the training of Iraqi military and police units has improved since the summer but that those forces will not be prepared to undertake security missions on their own until late 2006 at the earliest, according to a study released Tuesday by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"Changes in the way the U.S. is preparing Iraqi forces may create the kind of Iraqi forces that are vital to both Iraq's future and any successful reductions in U.S. forces and U.S. withdrawals from Iraq," Anthony Cordesman says in the latest in a series of papers he has produced as a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"It is not clear that these (new

training) steps can overcome the legacy of past neglect and failure, but they do offer serious hope," adds Cordesman, a former Pentagon official who has made several trips to Iraq.

Cordesman describes as "tragic" a series of U.S. failures in Iraq that created the current problems, including "a failure to react to the growing insurgency in Iraq and for the need for Iraqi military, security and police forces that could be true partners in fighting that threat."

He blames not only the Bush administration's civilian leadership, but also the U.S. military. "In general," Cordesman says, "the military, as well as the civilians, did not plan for successful conflict termination or stability operations, and it focused on early withdrawal rather than the range of missions that might occur." He recalls that

some pre-invasion plans called for "a rapid reduction to 30,000 (U.S.) troops — rather than for an effective stability and security effort."

The Cordesman report provides a background to President Bush's remarks to reporters Monday that the insurgency is "having an effect" and that the training of Iraqis has produced "mixed" results. According to figures provided by the Pentagon, the number of trained Iraqi army and police units is far below the number required.

For example, as of Dec. 6, the Pentagon reported that 27,000 trained army troops were needed but that only 3,428 were listed as "trained on hand." The figures showed that 135,000 police officers were required but that only 50,798 were "trained on hand."

The Iraqi national guard had a better ratio, with 401,115 troops considered "trained on hand" of the required force of 62,000.

1st ID soldier saves civilian

A 1st Infantry Division Artillery Regiment soldier recently saved the life of a Department of Defense worker who was choking on his lunch, according to a news release from the division's public affairs office.

Spc. Elspeth Barnett, a combat medic

Barnett asked if he needed assistance and the man, unable to answer, placed his hand across his neck, indicating distress. Barnett used the Heimlich maneuver, a two-handed squeeze under the breastbone, to immediately dislodge the food.

She then turned the man over to Navy medics, who took him to a base medical clinic.

Barnett, who has been nominated for an Army Commendation Medal, had been assigned to Forward Operating Base Summerall near Baiji, Iraq, until her unit moved recently to Camp Doha, the release said.

From staff reports

Mosul bomber may have worn Iraqi army uniform

BY MATT KELLEY
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. commander in northern Iraq, Brig. Gen. Carter Ham, said Thursday that the suicide bomber who killed 13 U.S. servicemen in Mosul on Tuesday likely was wearing an Iraqi military uniform.

Tuesday's explosion killed 22 people, injured scores more and put Pentagon officials on the defensive against new criticism of holes in the protections for troops in Iraq.

Speaking to CNN on Thursday, Ham said the investigation into the bombing was continuing.

"We don't know exactly how it happened ... In [the investigators'] very best judgment, the explosion was caused by a device that was inside the facility. The question now turns to, 'How did that happen?'"

"What we think is likely ... is that an individual in an Iraqi military uniform, possibly with a vest-worn explosive device, was inside the facility, and detonated the facility, causing this tragedy."

Ham was questioned as to what steps he was taking to recheck people entering the base.

"I think we have a good procedure to do that, but clearly in this instance, I failed to identify some shortcomings that allowed this to occur. That's why we're doing the investigation, to find out: Where was that team that these murderers were able to exploit?"

Ham conceded that the attack was effective.

"It is an enemy success, and they are clearly using that ... as a rallying call."

Ham said he was concerned that the bombing could be used as a recruiting tool and the chance that other individuals would attempt "copycat attacks."

The attack inside a U.S. Army mess hall represents a breach of the most basic principles of military security and points to significant weaknesses in the screening of Iraqis who are allowed onto the base, experts say.

"This is an incredible occurrence, that someone could have come in undetected with some kind of bomb," said Mitch Mitchell, a retired Army officer who helps design security training for the military. "It blows my mind that force protection on the base is that poor."

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld defended U.S. troop security in Iraq, saying it was "an enormous challenge to provide force protection."

"They have to be right 100 percent of the time," he said at a Wednesday press conference. "An attacker only has to be right occasionally."

Mitchell and other experts said it was obvious the military was not taking basic protective actions for U.S. troops in Iraq. On most bases, troops have their meals in large dining hall tents like the one attacked Tuesday, for example, instead of in small, scattered groups. That presents a tempting target for insurgents, Mitchell said.

"It shows you the level at which force protection was addressed on that base, and it wasn't very high," said Mitchell, an analyst with the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the military's National Defense University.

Stripes editor Pat Dickson contributed to this report from Washington.



A man argues with a U.S. and Iraqi soldiers as he waits to be allowed to enter Fallujah on Thursday, as the first of the town's 300,000 residents who fled last month's U.S.-led offensive started returning.

Fighting erupts in Fallujah

BY NICK WADHAMS
The Associated Press

FALLUJAH, Iraq — U.S. Marines battled insurgents in Fallujah on Thursday, with warplanes dropping bombs and tanks shelling suspected guerrilla positions in the heaviest fighting in weeks, erupting as the first residents returned to the devastated city. At least three Marines were killed in the area, the military said.

The fighting was the heaviest in Fallujah since Dec. 10, when seven Marines, three Iraqi troops and about 30 insurgents were killed. The former insurgent stronghold has seen sporadic violence, including artillery and small-arms fire, since the United States captured it in a weekend offensive last month.

F-18 fighter-bombers were seen striking at targets in the city's outskirts. Tank and artillery fire also was heard.

U.S. officials said Marines and insurgents were killed in the Fallujah.

lujah fighting. A military spokeswoman said three Marines were killed in action Thursday in Anbar province, which surrounds Fallujah.

American commanders have hailed the November offensive to retake Fallujah as a major tactical victory. But pockets of insurgents remain in the city — and violence elsewhere in Iraq has escalated since the capture of Fallujah, after many guerrillas apparently slipped out of Fallujah to operate in central and northern Iraq.

A U.S. soldier also was killed Thursday by a roadside bomb in Baghdad, the military said.

The new Fallujah fighting came as the first group of returning residents lined up at checkpoints into the city, brandishing documents to prove to Iraqi policemen that they had the right to enter. Once in the city, returnees visited the remains of bombed-out and looted homes they fled — along with most of Fallujah's population of approximately 250,000 people.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Wednesday, at least 1,321 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,021 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said.

The figures include three military civilians. The AP count is 20 higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Wednesday. The military has not yet included fatalities from Tuesday's attack on a dining hall near Mosul, Iraq.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A Marine died in a vehicle accident Tuesday in Iraq's Anbar province.

The latest identifications reported by military officials and Maine Gov. John Baldacci:

■ Army Spc. Thomas John Dostie, 20, Somerville, Maine, and Army Sgt. Lynn Robert Poulin Sr., 47, Freedom, Maine, killed Tuesday in an attack on a mess hall near Mosul, Iraq; assigned to Headquarters Company, 133rd Engineer Battalion, Maine Army National Guard.

■ Army Sgt. 1st Class Paul D. Karpovich, 30, Bridgeport, Pa.; killed Tuesday in an attack on a mess hall near Mosul, Iraq; assigned to the 1st Battalion, 417th Regiment, 1st Brigade, 88th Division, Pennsylvania, N.J.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Neil D. Petsche, 21, Lena, Ill.; died Tuesday after a non-hostile vehicle incident in Iraq's Anbar province; assigned to 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1 Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif.

■ Army Staff Sgt. Donald B. Farmer, 33, Zion, Ill., and Army Sgt. Berry K. Meza, 23, League City, Texas, died Sunday in Shayuab, Kuwait, when a vehicle struck them; assigned to the 180th Transportation Battalion, 13th Corps Support Command, Fort Hood, Texas.





Courtesy of the Air Force

An unidentified soldier is removed from an ambulance by medical personnel during a snow storm at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany on Wednesday evening. The servicemember was wounded in an attack on a dining facility in Mosul, Iraq.

Most wounded in Mosul expected to fully recover

BY BEN MURRAY

Stars and Stripes

LANDSTUHL, Germany — Officials at the U.S. military's primary medical hub for troops wounded in Iraq said Thursday that all soldiers and civilians sent to the hospital after Tuesday's deadly attack on a dining area near Mosul, Iraq, are expected to survive, and most to fully recover.

By midday Thursday, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center had received 35 people hurt in the attack, at least seven of them civilians and 17 of whom are still in critical condition, said the hospital's commander, Col. Rhonda Cornum.

Cornum said she did not yet have an accurate count of how many civilians had come in on a flight that arrived Thursday morning, or which U.S. contractors they worked for in Iraq.

The hospital began receiving patients early Wednesday morning following an explosion that tore through a U.S. mess tent crowded with soldiers, civilian workers and Iraqi security forces. The blast killed 22 people, including 13 U.S. soldiers. Seventy people were injured in the attack, which military officials say was caused by an improvised explosive device.

Cornum said Landstuhl has already moved some of the wounded, including six critical cases, to Army medical centers in the United States, and expects the majority of the remaining patients to arrive at stateside hospitals by Monday.

The hospital is trying to get as many of the troops to U.S. hospitals by Christmas Day, Cornum said. Military officials even added an extra flight out of Germany on Saturday to get the wounded closer to their families for the holiday.

The bombing, which created the

largest rush of patients to the hospital from any single attack since the start of the war, produced a multitude of injuries rarely seen by Landstuhl doctors, Cornum said.

Many troops had neck, chest and abdomen wounds, which are normally protected against in IED attacks by body armor. Wounds suffered by those hurt in the explosion made it clear that they were caught unprepared for an attack when they sat down to eat lunch Tuesday, she said.

"It was obvious that these people were not wearing their battle armor," said Cornum, who had performed a surgery here Thursday morning.

U.S. "battle rattle" generally deflects serious wounds to the torso and results in injuries to the arms and legs, she said, though there were "a couple of amputations," among the wounded at Landstuhl.

None of the injuries seen at the hospital, however, provided any insight into the type of device used in the attack, which Pentagon officials said Wednesday they suspected was a suicide bombing.

Most patients arriving at the facility had already undergone surgery at medical centers in Iraq or Kuwait before being stabilized for the flight to Germany, and evidence of their original wounds has generally been "obliterated by the time they are here," Cornum said.

"It's hard to say what the injury looked like when they started," she said.

The rush of patients and the high percentage of critical cases flown to the hospital just days before Christmas put a strain on Landstuhl medical workers, though they met the challenge with poise, Cornum said.

Hospital staff, which has treated more than 21,500 troops for all

types of injuries since U.S. military operations began in Afghanistan in 2002, worked extra hours to care for the wounded. Medical teams around the region were kept on two-hour alert in case more were needed.

As of Thursday afternoon, no further patients with battle injuries from the Mosul attack were expected to arrive at Landstuhl, Cornum said.

E-mail Ben Murray at: murray@mil.strips.osd.mil

Troops reflect on attack that killed 22 comrades

BY JOSEPH GIORDONO

Stars and Stripes

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq — Unsettling as it is, most U.S. troops understand, if not accept, the possibility of being wounded or killed in direct combat.

But in the wake of the deadly strike on a base dining facility near Mosul, soldiers are talking more than ever about what amounts to a lucky shot, or worse.

Random mortars and rockets hit U.S. bases throughout Iraq. More often than not, they land harmlessly in empty spots inside the wire.

"But if just one of those hits a trailer or a [Tactical Operations Center] or a chow hall, what are you going to do?" said Sgt. Charles Carter, a 24-year-old 1st Cavalry Division soldier stationed at Camp Liberty, formerly called Camp Victory.

"You can be wearing full battle rattle, or you can be standing in your towel shaving. If it's going to hit you, it's going to hit you," Carter said.

"I don't mean to sound heartless about it, but it's something that you can't think about too much."

The same goes, he said, for the roadside bombs and car bombs that have become one of the main threats to servicemembers in Iraq.

Now with military officials saying a suicide bomber was

the likely cause of the Mosul blast, soldiers say they have another tactic to consider.

By Wednesday, new uniform regulations were in place at bases throughout Iraq. Soldiers and civilians at Camp Liberty, for instance, said they were ordered to wear their helmets and body armor outdoors at all times. Many people wore their body armor the whole time they were in the dining facilities.

Outside one large chow hall, soldiers increased scrutiny of people entering and directed servicemembers and civilians out of a patio-like area routinely used as a smoking stop after meals.

"Sorry for the inconvenience," said one of the soldiers on duty. "You all know what happened yesterday. It's for your own safety."

On Camp Liberty, officials had already been enforcing strict rules against taking things into and out of the dining facilities. Soldiers had previously joked that the measure was meant to keep them from smuggling extra drinks or food out.

Most weren't joking any more. "The thing in Mosul is what everyone's afraid of, but hopes never happens," said Sgt. John Stack of the 10th Mountain Division, also at Camp Liberty. "Was it a lucky shot? If so, there's not much anyone could have done."

E-mail Joseph Giordono at: giordono@stips.osd.mil



Rumsfeld 'truly saddened' by criticism

Defense secretary offers passionate defense of himself against detractors' recent comments

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, stung by criticism that he is insensitive to the needs of the troops and their families, offered his most impassioned defense Wednesday, saying he is "truly saddened" that anyone could doubt his commitment to the welfare of U.S. troops.



Rumsfeld

The normally stoic Rumsfeld said when he meets wounded soldiers or relatives of those killed in battle, "their grief is something I feel to my core."

"I am truly saddened by the thought that anyone could have the impression that I, or others here, are doing anything other than working urgently to see that the lives of the

fighting men and women are protected and are cared for in every way humanly possible," he said.

"And I hope and pray that every family member of those who have died so bravely knows how deeply I feel their loss."

Rumsfeld has been a lightning rod since the war began in March 2003, but criticism recently intensified after a Tennessee National Guard soldier asked him during a question-and-answer session with soldiers on Dec. 8 why he and his comrades had to scrounge for armor to protect their vehicles.

Rumsfeld gave an extended answer that included the statement, "You go to war with the Army you have, not the Army you might want or wish to have."

Critics called the response insensitive and castigated him for not doing more to prepare the U.S. military for the Iraqi invasion and its aftermath.

The following week, some Republicans joined Democrats in voicing dissatisfaction

with Rumsfeld.

Sen. John McCain, an Arizona Republican, said he had "no confidence" in Rumsfeld, citing the defense secretary's handling of the war and the failure to send more troops. Sen. Trent Lott, a Missouri Republican, said he believes Rumsfeld should be gone within a year. Neither directly called for his resignation.

The defense secretary was criticized again last weekend when it was reported that he did not personally sign letters of condolence to the families of dead soldiers, but instead relied on a mechanical device to affix his signature. He immediately abandoned the practice.

"My goodness, that's the least that we could expect of the secretary of defense, is having some personal attention paid by him," Sen. Chuck Hagel, a Nebraska Republican, said Sunday.

The next day, President Bush defended Rumsfeld, who has agreed to stay on for Bush's second term, saying his defense sec-

retary was "doing a very fine job."

A CNN-USA Today-Gallup poll released Monday found 52 percent of respondents believe Rumsfeld should resign, and 41 percent approve of his job performance. People were evenly split on Rumsfeld's performance in May, but most approved of his handling of the job about a year ago.

On Wednesday, Rumsfeld said, "I, and I know others, stay awake at night for concern for those at risk, with hope for their lives, for their success. And I want those who matter most, the men and women in uniform and their families, to know that. And I want them to know that we consider them, the soldiers, the sailors, the airmen, the Marines, to be America's true treasure. And I thank them and I thank their families."

Asked whether the criticism had undermined his ability to do his job, he said, "You get up in the morning and you think about what our troops are doing. And I must say if there is one thing that I can do, I can do what I'm doing."

Virtual reunions lift up airmen

BY STEPHEN SINGER
The Associated Press

CHICOPEE, Mass. — Air Force reservists from Connecticut and Massachusetts got an early Christmas gift Wednesday, taking a break from wartime duties in southwest Asia to reconnect with their families in a video teleconference.

The families of six reservists gathered in a conference room at Westover Air Reserve Base, where a television showed their loved ones in an undisclosed location. Another television brought the images of the loved ones to the reservists.

Master Sgt. Gerard Leamy of

Manchester, Conn., told his wife he was not crying as he brushed aside something on his cheek. He claimed it was dust.

Leamy, a mail carrier who has been overseas since September, said the Christmas season has not yet reached the war zone.

"Out here, it's just another day," he said. "On Christmas, we'll realize it."

His wife, Joyce, said she has "a lot to deal with as a single parent at home."

"We're not used to doing this kind of stuff as regular people," Joyce Leamy said.

Intimacy was nonexistent for the families as news reporters crowded into the conference

room at the start of one teleconference.

"Oh my gosh," Joyce Leamy said upon seeing her husband's image on TV. "It's amazing. Say something," she commanded her husband.

"Merry Christmas," he replied.

For the airmen, whose location was not disclosed by the Air Force for security purposes, it was a chance to communicate with their wives and children in a more familiar format than e-mails.

The mission of the servicemen, who are assigned to the 58th Aerial Port Squadron from the 439th Airlift Wing, is to conduct air transportation processing and



AP

Jack Leamy, 8, of Manchester, Conn., wipes tears from his eyes Wednesday during a video teleconference call at Westover Air Force Base, Mass., with his father, Master Sgt. Gerard Leamy, while sitting on the lap of his mother, Joyce. At right is Jacob's sister Corey, 15.

handle cargo and passengers supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

They are expected to return home next month, the Air Force

said.

The servicemen said nothing about their work or the circumstances they face.

Sean Flynn, 18, planned to buy extra equipment for himself and two friends by selling his San Francisco 49ers memorabilia, including a commemorative football and a jersey autographed by Jerry Rice.

Those plans ballooned into a full-blown fund-raising effort organized by a local sports store to better equip Flynn's whole unit — an effort that has angered military brass.

When news of the plan reached the unit, the Mountain View-based 445th Civil Affairs Battalion — officials insisted its soldiers had all the computer equipment and armor they need. "You can't put on a uniform and solicit money — the Army is not a fund-raising business," said Maj. Barbara Kuhn, spokeswoman for the battalion. "And there was concern that the money raised was going to be used for their personal benefit."

Flynn's plan got noticed when he took his 49ers gear to Fan Club Sports, a memorabilia shop in San Jose. Upon hearing of the motive, the store's owners and many customers decided to organize an online auction and fund-raiser to benefit Flynn's unit.

From The Associated Press

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GI's fund-raiser denied

MORGAN HILL, Calif. — An unusual flap has erupted between an Army Reserve unit and an Iraq-bound reservist who hopes to raise money for military equipment he wants to bring to the war zone.

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IN THE STATES

Ex-governor pleads guilty in corruption case

BY MATT APUZZO
AND JOHN CHRISTOFFERSON
The Associated Press

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — Former Gov. John G. Rowland, driven from office by a corruption scandal, pleaded guilty Thursday to a single federal charge that carries a sentence of up to five years in prison.

After reaching a deal with prosecutors, Rowland pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to steal honest service, a felony that also carries a possible \$250,000 fine.

The plea deal ends the two-year-long investigation into corruption in the administration of Rowland, who resigned July 1 after 9½ years in office. Rowland's lawyer, William F. Dow III, acknowledged the former governor was "the recipient of certain gratuities."

Connecticut's John Rowland could face up to five years in prison

Prosecutors told the judge that Rowland accepted \$107,000 worth of vacations, work on his cottage and free flights from state contractors and others.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Nora Dannahay said the single charge also involves a conspiracy to defraud the Internal Revenue Service.

U.S. District Judge Peter Dorsey advised Rowland that as a convicted felon he would not be able to vote or hold public office.

"There was an effort being made to deprive Connecticut citizens of the honest services of its officials," Dorsey said.

Federal guidelines call for a sentence of 15 to 21 months in prison, the lawyers involved said. Sentencing was set for March. In addition to the possible sentence and fine, prosecutors said he could be forced to pay more than \$35,000 to the IRS in unpaid taxes and interest.

"Obviously mistakes have been made throughout the last few years, and I accept responsibility for those," Rowland told reporters after entering the plea. "But I also ask the people of this state to appreciate and understand what we have tried to do over the past 25 years in public service."

The written plea agreement does not require Rowland to testify against others.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell, who took office after Rowland stepped down, said she felt "deep personal disappointment."

Rowland, 47, was once one of the GOP's rising young stars. He became engulfed in scandal in December 2003 when he admitted accepting renovations at his lakeside cottage — including a hot tub and new heating system from employees and state contractors — and lying about it. Other gifts and favors soon came to light.

Rowland resigned amid legislative hearings that threatened to lead to his impeachment. Rell will fill the remainder of his term, which expires after the November 2006 elections.

Airports to adjust their pat-down procedures

BY SIOBHAN MCDONOUGH
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In response to numerous complaints from women, the government has ordered airport security personnel to avoid touching female passengers between their breasts when performing patdowns.

Security screeners now will keep their hands to the "chest perimeter" of women unless detection equipment picks up the possibility that they are hiding explosives between their breasts.

The new method takes into consideration passenger discomfort while remaining steadfast in mitigating risks, said Transportation Security Administration spokesman Mark Hatfield.

The nation's 45,000 screeners are being told to pat down the perimeter of the chest, backside and abdomen, effective Thursday.

TSA has made other modifications. Last week it began allowing passengers to lower their arms after the first part of a search so they can be more comfortable.

Women have complained about the intrusiveness of the searches.

Roughly 2 million passengers a week are patted down. Some are searched this way after setting off metal detectors twice; others are chosen by computer.

The government has directed airport screeners to carry out more frequent, more thorough searches for explosives. That policy was instituted Sept. 22, after 90 people were killed in two plane crashes in Russia believed to have been caused by Chechen women who carried explosives on board.

For female passengers, screeners would use the back of the hand to pat down the center line of the chest and follow the bra line below the breast.



Don Wilmoth uses a snow blower to clear more than eight inches of snow in front of his home in Columbus, Ind., Wednesday. Heavy snow fell Wednesday morning across southern and central Indiana in the first wave of a winter wallopp that was expected to dump as much as a foot of snow in some places.

Frigid temperatures disrupt travel

BY KIMBERLY HEFLING
The Associated Press

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — Frigid temperatures, blasting wind and more snow than some places normally see in a year left parts of the Midwest and South paralyzed Thursday, and transformed a section of highway in southern Indiana into a parking lot.

The winter storm dumped double-digits of snow from Ohio to Wyoming, the Texas Panhandle to the Great Lakes, disrupting pre-Christmas travel. Motorists in parts of Mississippi and Tennessee were warned Thursday to stay off highways iced up from freezing rain. Hundreds of thousands lost power in Ohio. "We're still stuck here. It's been about 13 hours," Ken Sabatini, 52, of Leawood, Kan., said Thursday morning. He, his wife and two children were traveling to Cincinnati for Christmas. "It's cold outside and we're doing our best to stay inside the car."

Temperatures fell to 12 degrees overnight, and Sabatini said some motorists had run out of gas and were sleeping in a stranded Greyhound Bus to stay warm.

The Indiana National Guard was bringing stranded motorists from Interstate 64 to hotels in Evansville or the Red Cross offices.

Gov. Joe Kernan declared a disaster emergency for portions of the state and urged a delay in Christmas travel to allow time for roads to be cleared.

The traffic snarl began when semis had trouble getting up hills and rolled back, blocking traffic, police said. A similar problem tied up traffic on a stretch of Interstate 71 in Kentucky.

"We're still stuck here. It's been about 13 hours."

Ken Sabatini
trapped in Ohio while trying to get to Cincinnati

The Wednesday snowfall at Evansville of 19.3 inches shattered the record for any single day, set Feb. 25, 1993, when 10.9 inches fell. It was also well over the normal yearly total of 14.2 inches.

Paducah, Ky., got 14 inches, more than the yearly norm of 10, and state police closed down a 13-mile stretch of the I-64 in both directions west of Louisville.

Ohio was a patchwork: up to 16 inches of snow in some places, but a combination of snow, sleet and rain in the northeastern part of the state. Electric companies

serving most of the state said 301,000 homes and businesses were without power.

In Illinois, where up to 20 inches of snow fell, forecasters warned that wind chills would reach as low as 25 below zero, and high snowdrifts created a hazardous morning commute, officials said.

Cincinnati was looking at about 20 inches before the system, with its high winds and freezing temperatures, moved on.

Parts of Arkansas looked forward to only the ninth white Christmas in 120 years as the storm barreled across the state.

As arctic air surged southward into the Mississippi Valley, a combination of freezing rain and sleet made driving treacherous across the Mississippi. The Highway Patrol urged motorists to suspend their travel "at least until midmorning," said agency spokesman Warren Strain.

At least seven weather-related traffic deaths were reported — three in Ohio and one each in New Mexico, Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma.

Nine people received minor injuries in a series of accidents on snowy interstate in Wyoming just north of the Colorado state line.

In Amarillo, Texas, 3.7 inches of snow fell Wednesday, more than triple the previous record for the date. Hundreds of flights were grounded and others delayed Wednesday at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

Governor recount

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Democrats allowed themselves to celebrate a little and Republicans vowed to keep fighting as Democrat Christine Gregoire captured a 10-vote lead in the hand recount of the nearly 3 million ballots for Washington's governor — not yet.

After losing two previous tallies, Gregoire is now expected to beat Republican Dino Rossi. A Wednesday state Supreme Court decision allowing Democrat-heavy King County to count 700-plus belatedly discovered ballots will likely widen her margin of victory.

Gregoire was not declaring victory — not yet.

Republican officials say they will blanket the state over the next week looking for Rossi voters whose ballots were allegedly disqualified, and will ask county canvassing boards to reconsider those ballots.

Slain pregnant woman

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The woman accused of strangling a mother-to-be and cutting the baby from her womb often faked being pregnant to get attention, even though she had her babies tied 14 years ago, according to her ex-husband.

Carl Boman, of Bartlesville, Okla., told Kansas City television station WDAF-TV on Tuesday that he thinks his former wife, Lisa M. Montgomery, became so wrapped up in her pregnancy story that she needed to come up with a baby to save face.

Montgomery has been charged with the death of Bobbie Jo Stinnett, 23, who was found dead hanging from a skis in his Mo., home Dec. 16. The baby Stinnett had carried for eight months was missing.

The baby and Montgomery, 36, of Leawood, Kan., were found the next day. Family and friends said she tried to pass off Stinnett's baby as her own.

Montgomery has been incapable of having a baby since having her tubes tied in 1990 after delivering a baby girl, according to her ex-husband.

From The Associated Press

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Study: Obesity a health risk even in active women

BY JANET MCCONNAUGHEY
The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Being fit but fat isn't good enough. Excess weight, all by itself, can take years off your life, even if you get plenty of exercise, a study found.

"There has been some suggestion that if you are particularly active, you don't have to worry about your body weight, about your diet. That's very misleading," said the report's lead author, Dr. Frank Hu of the Harvard School of Public Health.

The study of 116,500 women was published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine and was based on questionnaires used in the Nurses' Health Study, which has followed female nurses since 1976, and on death certificates and medical records.

Women who were physically active but obese had almost twice the risk of death of women who were both active and lean.

Women who were sedentary but slender were 55 percent more likely to die early.

Women who were both sedentary and obese were almost 2½ times more likely to die.

"Being physically active did not cancel out the increased mortality of (being) overweight. Being lean did not counterbalance the risk effect of being sedentary," Hu said.

An editorial by David R. Jacobs Jr. and Mark A. Pereira of the University of Minnesota noted that the study relied on nurses' reports of exercise and weight rather than direct measurement, and did not include light to moderate exercise — the form most Americans get.

Dr. Timothy Church of the Cooper Institute, which is devoted to research on exercise and health, praised the findings.

"If you're lean but you're sedentary, don't fool yourself. You're still at risk. You need to get physically active," he said.

\$50,000 feline clone used to spurs ethics debate

BY PAUL ELIAS
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The first cloned-to-order pet sold in the United States is named Little Nicky, a 9-week-old kitten delivered to a Texas woman saddened by the loss of a cat she had owned for 17 years.

The kitten cost its owner \$50,000 and was created from DNA from her beloved Maine coon cat, named Nicky, who died last year.

"He is identical. His personality is the same," the owner, Julie, said in an interview. She asked that her last name and hometown not be disclosed because she said she fears being targeted by groups opposed to cloning.

The company that created Little Nicky, Sausalito-based Genetic Savings and Clone, said it hopes by May to have produced the world's first cloned dog — a much more lucrative market than cats.

The kitten's creation and sale reignited fierce ethical and scientific debate over cloning technology, which is rapidly advancing.

Commercial interests already are cloning prized cattle for about \$20,000 each, and scientists have cloned mice, rabbits, goats, pigs, horses — and even the endangered banteng, a wild bull that is found mostly in Indonesia.

Aside from human cloning, which has been achieved only at the microscopic embryo stage, no cloning project has fueled more



DNA from Nicky, above, a male Maine coon cat who died last year, was used to successfully clone a kitten, right, named Little Nicky, by the Sausalito, Calif.-based company Genetic Savings and Clone. Nicky's owner, a Texas woman identified only as "Julie," paid \$50,000 for his clone.

PHOTOS BY GENETIC SAVINGS AND CLONE/AP

debate than the marketing plans of Genetic Savings and Clone.

"It's morally problematic and a little reprehensible," said David Magnus, co-director of the Center for Biomedical Ethics at Stanford University. "For \$50,000, she could have provided homes for a lot of strays."

Animals rights activists complain that new feline production systems aren't needed because



thousands of stray cats are euthanized each year for want of homes.

Lou Hawthorne, Genetic Savings and Clone's chief executive, said his company purchases thousands of ovaries from spay clinics across the country. It extracts the eggs, which are combined with the genetic material from the animals to be cloned.

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Chia, the safe pet to give for Christmas



BY DAN NEPHIN
The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — After checking three stores, Beth Cohen finally found a must-have Christmas gift for her 10-year-old daughter to give to her uncle: a Chia Scooby-Doo.
It's bound to be \$15 well spent — he'd asked for it for about five

years in a row. And while the uncle recognizes the humor in the quirky pottery, Cohen said, Chia Pets aren't for her.
"I think they're kind of odd," she said.

Over the past two decades, the Chia Pet has grown beyond its marketer's expectations to become a classic kitsch gift.
The company began marketing

Chia Pets — the Chia Ram was the first — around Christmas 1982 after purchasing a variation from a man who happened upon the idea in Mexico, said Michael Hirsch, vice president of Joseph Enterprises Inc.

The company kept the trademark name, but revamped the product and packaging and began advertising on television. The

honey "Ch-Ch-Ch-Chia" spot shows children applying the seed mixture to the terra cotta planter.

Hirsch realizes that Chia Pets often are given as gag gifts, but doesn't mind.

"If you would have asked us in '82 how long it would last, we'd have said, 'Hopefully through 1983,'" he said. "As soon as the TV [commercials] started, stores started calling us, asking us for more. So who knew?"

In an age of video games and iPods, the simple product has secured a foothold as a holiday gift, though Hirsch isn't exactly sure why.

But Audrey Guskey, a Duquesne University marketing professor and consumer trends expert who monitors Christmas spending and gifts, said Chia Pets tap into nostalgia, which has become a theme in recent years.

Jonathan Pontell, a pop culture expert and trend consultant who coined the term "Generation Jones" to describe people sandwiched between Generation X and baby boomers, agreed that nostalgia has become popular since the terrorist attacks in 2001.

"There is something about harkening back to a simpler, less chaotic time," Pontell said.

Generation Jones is partly responsible in part for Chia's success, said Pontell, 46, of Los Angeles. Those born during the period "developed a certain sense of irony" — a defense, he said, from the failed promises of 1960s and 1970s.

"I can remember specifically when Chia Pets came out on the market," he said. "We thought they were so cheesy that they were cool," he said.

New Chia products are added every couple of years and there are about a dozen varieties, including Shrek, Scooby-Doo, an assortment of animals and an herb garden. The company also markets The Clapper, another holiday gift.

Millions of Chia Pets — which are marketed in other countries including England, Germany, France — have been sold, but Hirsch wouldn't be more specific or discuss sales figures.



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Right up Arafat's alley

NEW YORK — Late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat invested \$1.3 million in a company that owns a popular bowling alley in Manhattan, newly released documents show.

Arafat made the investment in New York City-based Strike Holdings, owner of Bowlmor Lanes, through a holding company he created called Onyx Funds, Bloomberg Markets Magazine reported Wednesday.

Bowlmor is located in Greenwich Village and is popular with Manhattan hipsters.

News of the investment disturbed some customers at the alley, which advertises on its Web site as an ideal location for bar and bat mitzvahs for Jewish teens.

"If I had known, I wouldn't have come, but I promised the kids," said Steve Saslow, 55.

From wire reports



Stephen Paul Jackson, curator of the Aluminum Tree and Aesthetically Challenged Seasonal Ornament Museum and Research Center, is shown with one of the trees inside the museum in Brevard, N.C.

O tacky tree, O tacky tree!

Curator turns a joke into a movement

BY PAUL NOWELL
The Associated Press

BREVARD, N.C. — The guest book was blank on a recent morning at the world's only museum for aluminum Christmas trees.

It was impossible to tell whether one had been visiting — or if visitors were simply ashamed to admit having stopped at a shrine to holiday tackiness.

What began as a joke in 1991, with a single shiny tree retrieved from the trash, has become an obsession for curator Stephen Paul Jackson. The home designer, 48, confesses to fond feelings for his collection of evershiny trees.

"I really like the retro look of the 1950s," Jackson said as he led a lone visitor on a tour of the museum, which fills part of the lobby of a college music hall in this town in North Carolina's western mountains. "As a designer, I like their simplicity."

When Jackson started his collection 13 years ago, raising his lone voice in defense of the fake Christmas tree, he unwittingly started a movement.

"I have a group of volunteers and fans who expect to see this every year," he said.

Jackson struggles to keep a straight face as he recites the full name of his museum: The Alumi-

nium Tree and Aesthetically Challenged Seasonal Ornament Museum and Research Center, or ATOM for short.

This year's collection includes 30 trees of all shapes and sizes. Jackson even put a satellite museum on tour by shipping 25 more trees to a friend who is displaying them in Nashville, Tennessee.

In the foyer of Brevard College's Porter Center for the Performing Arts, vintage Christmas music floats through Jackson's treasure grove of silver, green and blue trees. The "Elvis Tree" has photos of the King hanging from its branches. The "Toilet Tree" has copper-colored floats for ornaments and is adorned with strands of pink, yellow and blue shower curtain connectors.

Jackson's first tacky tree was a joke from a friend. Jackson returned the joke by holding a tacky ornament tree-trimming party. When subsequent annual parties outgrew Jackson's living room, he relocated the display, first to Brevard's American Legion hall and other locations. This year, he accepted an offer from the college to use the music hall's lobby.

Despite the absence of names in the guest book, Jackson said the museum averages about 100 visitors per day, many of them attending concerts or other events.

Last-minute givers get impulsive

BY STEPHANIE STOUGHTON
The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Debbie Hunt planned to buy a hooded sweatshirt for her son. She got one — plus two shirts.

At the Poess boutique in Richmond's Carytown shopping district, colorful purses drew Ryan Lancaster's eye. Without blinking, the 30-year-old salesman dropped \$300 for his girlfriend.

Welcome to the desperate time of the impulse buy, really appearing the final few days before Christmas when it dawns on many consumers that their shopping days are numbered.

And for some last-minute buyers, this short period can be a dangerous time. Confronted by long lines, time constraints and a sea of choices, they are often tempted

to purchase on impulse and then sort out their finances later, consumer finance and marketing experts say.

"It's so easy to let your debt get out of control, especially around the holidays," said Michael McAuliffe, president of Family Credit Counseling Service in Rockford, Ill.

The National Retail Federation estimates that consumers had yet to complete 18 percent of their holiday spending as of Dec. 19, based on a survey by BIGresearch, perhaps because the two extra days between Thanksgiving and Christmas this year encouraged more people to procrastinate.

For most of the year, people walk around with a mental budget, said Suzanne Shu, an assis-

tant marketing professor at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. But during the holidays, they develop "self-control loopholes" that can expand when they shop without a firm list and at the very last minute.

One temptation is to buy luxury goods such as Burberry scarves and Fendi purses — items that shoppers might reconsider if they had more time to order gifts online or find a stylish sweater in the right color and size.

Many buyers also reassure themselves that a few furry slippers, scented candles and stocking stuffers won't bust their budgets. But they forget that, by the time they finish buying the little stuff, they could have bought an expensive gift, said Cate Williams, vice president of financial literacy for Money Management International in Chicago.

Gifts of Botox, nose jobs on the rise

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Plastic surgeons say they're working overtime during the holidays reshaping faces, breasts and tummies as husbands and boyfriends give their loved ones the gift of a makeover.

Kendra Schroeder of Pasadena says her husband gave her a \$7,000 breast job as an early Christmas present, and she couldn't wait to get it done.

"I never had breasts, and I wanted something there," Schroeder said. "I feel very loved that he was willing to do that for me."

Cosmetic surgeons are often busy around the holidays because people use time away from work to recuperate. But this year, some surgeons say they're seeing an uplift in business, possibly due to an improving economy and strong spending on luxuries.

Dr. Neal Reisman, associate chief of plastic sur-

gery at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, said staff is working into the evenings and on Saturdays to meet the demand.

Some, like Schroeder, come in for major jobs, but others want touchups to get ready for holiday parties. They get Botox injections to eliminate wrinkles or collagen to puff up the lips.

Cosmetic surgery has been on the rise for several years.

Nationwide, doctors performed 8.3 million such procedures last year, up 20 percent from the year before, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

The most common surgeries were liposuction, breast augmentations, eyelid jobs, rhinoplasties and breast reductions, according to the trade group. The most common non-surgical procedures were Botox injections and laser hair removal.

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Company gun-shy about touting toy

Christmas pop-culture classic comes wrapped in mystique, controversy

BY MELISSA NELSON
The Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — In popular culture, the Red Ryder BB gun is "the Holy Grail of Christmas gifts," but the maker of the present so desperately desired by Ralphie Parker in the movie "A Christmas Story" is gun-shy when it comes to publicity.

"They are a classic American brand, but anytime you talk about selling guns to kids in today's society, they are pariah," said New York-based toy consultant Chris Byrne, who isn't surprised that Daisy Outdoor Products doesn't boast about the gun's popularity.

Daisy would answer only limited questions and a spokesman emphasized that the company's BB

guns are not toys.

"They are not purchased by children and should not be used by young people without adult supervision," said Joe Murfin, Daisy's vice president of marketing. "A BB gun or an air gun is an appropriate Christmas gift assuming the parent making the gift is willing to take the time to work with the young person and teach them gun safety and marksmanship."

The gun, named for the comic strip cowboy Red Ryder, remained a favorite among children for decades and was the inspiration for the 1983 movie "A Christmas Story," about a young boy in the 1940s who longs for "an official Red Ryder, carbine action, 200-shot, Range Model



Little Rock, Ark., sporting goods store employee Matthew Watson poses with a packaged Daisy Red Ryder BB gun Tuesday. Despite the mass appeal of the BB gun — and being the object of desire for Ralphie Parker in cult fave "A Christmas Story" — the toy's manufacturer is reluctant to publicize the controversial gift.

air rifle with a compass on the stock and this thing which tells time."

Despite the cult popularity of the movie, and the zest for Daisy and Red Ryder memorabilia among collectors, the company has for years shunned publicity.

Recent negative news could

contribute to the company's desire to keep a low profile.

Last year, Daisy settled a lawsuit brought by the government that alleged defects in 7.5 million high-velocity, multi-pump pellet-BB rifles marketed to shooters age 16 and up.

Daisy collector Neal Pun-

chard, who wrote a retrospective coffee-table book to mark the company's first century, said it is a shame that such a venerable American institution has gotten overlooked because there is such an anti-gun backlash. "But then, anyway you slice it, they're selling guns to kids," he said.

New Jersey's ban on carols sparks debate

BY DAVID PORTER
The Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — As a Jewish boy growing up in Texas, Joel Schwartzberg performed many traditional Christmas songs in the elementary school choir.

Uncomfortable about singing evangelical versions of songs such as "Silent Night," Schwartzberg kept his lips sealed during those parts. He remembers being told by his teacher that he had to sing all the words if he wanted to participate.

Schwartzberg said those memories surfaced this month when the South Orange-Maplewood school district decided to ban instrumental Christmas carols at school-sponsored holiday con-

certs.

The Alliance Defense Fund, an Arizona-based organization that funds legal actions in cases involving religious expression, is considering challenging South Orange-Maplewood's decision in court.

"When these school boards start censoring Christ out of the holidays, they're on the wrong side of the Constitution," said Gary McCaleb, the group's senior counsel. "It's a kind of Orwellian doublespeak, in my mind."

Jessica Schneider, a 16-year-old who plays in the ensemble band at Columbia High in Maplewood, called the district's Christmas carol ban "kind of silly."

"Personally, I don't know anyone who objected, and as a stu-



Joel Schwartzberg holds his daughter, Mylie, at a holiday display in Maplewood, N.J., last week. Schwartzberg says he supports his school district's ban on Christmas carols at school holiday concerts.

dent who's part of the school's Jewish population, I would think I would have," Schneider said.

"To me, it's just music and it's giving the community something to be happy about it."

Schwartzberg said a line can be

drawn. "When students are compelled to engage in evangelical activities — even without intent or proselytizing — with the alternative being nothing except to sit at, I think that's not appropriate."

Foragers turn holidays green with mistletoe

BY PHYLIS SPEIDELL
The Virginian-Pilot
(Norfolk, Va.)

SUFFOLK, Va. — Jay Matthews put the shotgun to his shoulder and fired a single shot high into the branches of a tree.

The 15-year-old smiled as his catch fluttered to the ground — a prime clump of mistletoe, shiny green leaves, waxy white berries and Christmas money in his pocket.

Shooting mistletoe from the treetops is a time-honored technique for harvesting the holiday greenery that usually grows too high for plucking from the ground. For Jay, an enterprising sophomore at Western Branch High School in Suffolk, it's a family tradition and a way to earn some money.

But this method is by no means the only way to harvest the traditional holiday smooching incentive.

For the past 16 years, Ron Holmes of Hampton has used a gentler way. The mechanic, who trims trees in his spare time, scrambles as high as 100 feet up trees to hand pick the best branches.

Mistletoe isn't something people grow. It spreads from tree to tree via birds, especially the cedar waxwing, a migratory bird that loves the berries.

Holmes delivers some of the mistletoe to retailers such as Norfolk Wholesale Floral and gives away even more to friends and co-workers.

The price, usually only a few hundred dollars, go to the five Holmes children for their Christmas shopping.

Program helps moms get home for holidays, and beyond

The Associated Press



Tanya Y. Pickle weeps after Atlanta Falcons running back Warrick Dunn, right, gave her and her youngest son, Kendrell Miller, a tour of their new home in St. Petersburg, Fla.

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Tanya Pickle fought for some semblance of control as Atlanta Falcons football player Warrick Dunn handed her the keys to her new home.

It was a losing battle. Tears rolled down the single mother's face as she stammered a surprised "thank you" to the man helping her pay \$115,000 for a place that she and her two boys can call their own.

"You can cry," Dunn said softly, and that Pickle did, as she toured the three-bedroom, two-bath home, furnished right down to chocolate chip cookies in the cookie jar and a Christmas tree in the living room.

"Thank you, thank you," Pickle, 28, kept repeating before a crowd that included housing officials and her new neighbors. "I love it!" Pickle, who works as a shipping and receiving manager for a small St. Petersburg company, is among 52 single moms and 135 children and dependents aided by the Warrick Dunn Founda-

tion's "Homes for the Holidays" program in St. Petersburg, Tampa, St. Louis, Atlanta and Baton Rouge, La.

Dunn, a former Tampa Bay Buccaneer, launched the program in 1997 in memory of his own single mother, who had lived all her life for her own home — and died without having one.

"This is why the program is so special," Dunn said quietly. "Because you can help other people live their dream."

With the foundation's assistance, Pickle got the home at a discount. Dunn contributed \$5,000, the city gave \$10,000 in the form of a "forgiven loan" that will expire after 10 years; the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development contributed \$37,950.

Pickle put down \$2,000 of her own money and will make total payments of \$611 per month for a mortgage of about \$65,000, according to Karen Coe, community lending officer for AmSouth Bank, who assisted in the closing.

IN THE WORLD



In a wide-ranging end-of-year news conference, Russian President Vladimir Putin criticized the plan for elections in Iraq, which he said could not be fair amid a continuing U.S.-led occupation.

Putin mulls if U.S. is isolating Russia

BY VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV
The Associated Press

MOSCOW — President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that he valued the partnership of President Bush but voiced suspicion that the United States might be behind what the Kremlin sees as efforts to isolate Russia and even destabilize it.

With Russia already feeling hemmed in by U.S. bases in former Soviet Central Asia and U.S. military trainers in Georgia, Putin has taken issue with Western and particularly U.S. activity in Ukraine, where the presidential election that sparked a weeklong crisis goes into a third round this weekend.

His emotions came boiling to the surface during a three-hour Kremlin news conference, during which he took questions from 51 journalists, pausing occasionally to sip tea from a blue-and-white china cup.

Putin was asked for a reaction to an interview in which Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski said that "for every superpower, Russia without Ukraine is better than Russia with Ukraine."

"I will interpret this [statement by Kwasniewski] as striving to limit Russia's ability to develop relations with its neighbors, then

it means a desire to isolate the Russian Federation," Putin said.

"I don't think that is the goal of U.S. policy," he said, but added he would ask Bush about it when they meet in Slovakia in February. Putin then blamed the United States for a policy on Chechnya "aimed at creating elements that would destabilize the Russian Federation."

The comments were in line with Putin's increasingly combative attitude toward the West and especially the United States. The Kremlin is convinced that the United States is behind a campaign to install Ukraine's pro-Western opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko at the helm of the nation Russia has always regarded as its main satellite.

Putin criticized the plan for elections in Iraq, which he said could not be fair amid a continuing U.S.-led occupation. He also assailed the United States for saying that Chechnya wasn't ready for elections even though it was sponsoring elections in Iraq.

"I have strong doubts that it's possible to create conditions for democratic elections [in Iraq] when its entire territory is occupied by foreign troops," he said, denouncing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's plan to monitor the Iraqi vote as a "farce."

London stabbings

LONDON — An armed man went on a stabbing rampage in north London on Thursday, killing one person and critically injuring five others, police said.

Metropolitan Police said they began receiving reports of stabbings outside a train station and on streets in the Edmonton, Enfield and Haringey areas from around 8:20 a.m.

Police said the assailant was driving a car and pulling off the road to stab his victims as they walked on busy streets between 8 and 9:30 a.m.

A 30-year-old man was arrested after police tracked the car's registration number to his north

London address.

Coffee, not marijuana

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Fewer coffee shops are openly selling marijuana and hashish in the Netherlands, the Justice Ministry said Wednesday.

The decline in the number of coffee shops is part of a long-term dip in such shops due to regional laws banning the sale of drugs to minors under 18 and zoning rules keeping such establishments far from schools, said Jitske Parfodé, a Tilburg University researcher.

She said the number of cafes selling drugs has fallen 36 percent since 1997.

From wire reports

Karzai picks new, old faces for seats in Afghan Cabinet

Warlord defense minister replaced by his deputy

BY PAUL HAVEN
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — President Hamid Karzai chose a new Cabinet on Thursday, heeding calls to sideline warlords from top positions — including the defense minister — and creating a new post to oversee the fight against opium production.

Defense Minister Mohammed Fahim, a prominent Tajik warlord and the head of the northern alliance that helped the United States drive the Taliban from power in 2001, was replaced by his deputy, Abdul Rahim Wardak, according to a decree announced by Karzai on Afghan state television.

The new Cabinet was announced on state-run television, but several government officials leaked the list of Cabinet members to The Associated Press hours before the official announcement.

Wardak is a Pashtun who made a name for himself as a commander in the 1980s fighting Soviet occupation, then fled abroad as its country descended into civil war.

Southern warlord Gul Agha Sherzai also was removed from the Cabinet, where he was given works minister.

Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani, a former World Bank official credited with securing large commitments of foreign aid, was replaced by Central Bank Governor Anwar ul-Haq Ahadi, a longtime Karzai ally. Ghani was likely to take over as chief of Kabul University, the officials said.

Foreign Minister Abdullah and Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Jalali, both popular in the West, were kept on.

However, at least one regional strongman is joining the government.

Ismael Khan, the powerful western warlord whom Karzai removed as governor of Herat earlier this year, was given the position of water and energy minister.

The post is not considered a top-tier position, but Khan's selection is likely to prompt criticism from human rights groups, who want Karzai to crack down on the incidence of warlords and build a more professional political class.

Khan was accused of torture

while governor of Herat, but also was credited with bringing stability and relative prosperity to the region. Karzai has walked a tight-rope in trying to limit the influence of the warlords, whose large private armies are still in control of large swaths of the countryside.

In addition to the top spots, a new Countercorruption Ministry was created, with relative unknown Habibullah Qadri chosen to run it. The position will be closely watched to see if Karzai makes good on a pledge to wipe out opium production. Karzai has recently called for a "holy war" against the multibillion-dollar drug trade, and said it is a greater threat to the nation than the Taliban or al-Qaida.

Karzai also created the new post of economics minister, naming Amin Farhang, the former reconstruction chief.

The Cabinet selections are seen as crucial to how this war-ravaged nation will deal with its myriad problems, including a destroyed infrastructure, a stubborn Taliban and al-Qaida insurgency and a booming opium trade that accounts for three-quarters of the world's market.

Dutch intelligence: Radical Islam spreading through Netherlands

BY ANTHONY DEUTSCH
The Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Intelligence officials warned Thursday that radical Islamic ideology is spreading to thousands of young Dutch Muslims through Internet web sites and on line chat rooms.

The Dutch intelligence agency, known by its acronym AIVD, identified the potential threat in an overview of domestic fundamentalist Islamic movements compiled for the Home Affairs Ministry.

Concerns about radical Islam are rising in Netherlands after filmmaker Theo van Gogh was shot and stabbed to death last month on a busy Amsterdam street. A letter pinned to his chest with a knife threatened politicians and other "infidel non-believers."

The 60-page report said eight sources of radical Islam pose a threat to the country, ranging from

Salafist mosques openly preaching anti-Western, antidemocratic ideas to an underground political movement encouraging violent jihad, or holy war.

"Europe and the Netherlands have been confronted with extreme violence," it said, referring to Van Gogh's murder and the train bombings in Madrid in March.

"Recruitment of mainly nonnative Dutch youths for armed radical Islamic holy war is more a trend than an incident. Simply, the international shift [to radicalization] has clearly impacted the Dutch situation," it said.

A move away from traditional physical outlets of Islamic ideology — such as mosques — to individual "virtual" followers on the web makes it harder for authorities to isolate potential threats, the report said.

"Especially the youth have found their way to web sites of radical Islamic spiritual leaders," it said. "These web sites increasingly contribute to the radicalization of Muslim communities in the Netherlands."

Ukrainian security group denies role in poisoning

The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Ukraine's security service on Thursday denied any involvement with the diabolical poisoning of Viktor Yushchenko, the country's top opposition leader and leading candidate in Sunday's runoff for the presidency.

In a statement posted on the Web site, the State Security Ser-

vice said "it has no relation with the worsening" of Yushchenko's health.

"The Ukrainian Security Service did not obtain a single official document that could provide ... a basis for the establishment of the time or the place or the fact of the candidate's poisoning," the statement said.

In an interview with The Associated Press last week, Yushchenko

said he was probably poisoned at a Sept. 5 dinner with security service chief Igor Smeshko and his deputy, Viktor Yatsuyuk. Both denied any involvement.

The diabolical disfigurement of Yushchenko's face, but he has recovered enough to carry on campaigning for president.

Prosecutors and a special parliamentary committee are investigating.

Journey to school in West Bank hazardous

Palestinian children need armed escorts

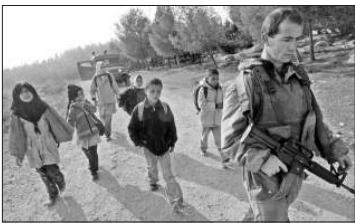
BY RAVI NESSMAN
The Associated Press

TUWANI, West Bank — The walk to school for five Palestinian children has become so dangerous they require an escort from Israeli soldiers and police.

Jewish settlers living along the path have repeatedly ambushed the young students, setting dogs on them, throwing stones and beating one 7-year-old girl with a stick until she bled, according to the children, their parents, their principal and human rights workers.

"It's rare that a day passes and there isn't an attempt to pick on the kids or, even worse, hurt them," said Omar Jundiye, father of three of the children and the uncle of the other two.

The attacks began after the outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian fighting in 2000, when tensions between settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank rose considerably. Dozens of settlers have been



An Israeli soldier and others guard Palestinian students, all members of the Jundiye family, as they walk past the Havat Maon Jewish outpost settlement on their way home from school. The children were verbally and physically abused when they went to school on their own.

killed in Palestinian shooting ambushes, while settlers on occasion clash with Palestinians and rampage through villages.

The staging ground for the children's misery is the ramshackle settlement outpost of Havat Maon, south of the Palestinian city of Hebron. Two months ago, Israeli forces decided to escort the students, after settlers also attacked international aid workers accompanying the youngsters.

On a recent day, the soldiers warmly greeted their five charges, between six and 12 years old, as they prepared to walk home on a road winding through the rocky, brush-covered hills of the southern West Bank.

The children, carrying over-

sized backpacks emblazoned with cartoon characters, walked in silence as they approached a small clutch of trees that hides Havat Maon. "With the soldiers, at least sometimes I don't feel afraid," said 9-year-old Tarek Jundiye.

But even the armed escorts have not completely stopped the harassment.

As the children walked home one recent afternoon, a settler hiding in the trees screamed curses in Hebrew at them. A soldier stopped to yell back.

When asked about the attacks, a resident of Havat Maon, who only gave his name as Gilad, said by telephone: "This is our country, and they [Palestinians] have no right to be here." He then hung up.

Dollar hits a new low against euro

BY DAVID RISING
The Associated Press

BERLIN — The U.S. dollar hit a new all-time low Thursday against the euro, which reached \$1.3483 after a mixed economic report from the U.S. Commerce Department.

The euro hovered around the previous mark of \$1.3470, set Dec. 7, in light European trading for most of the day before spiking after the report.

The 12-nation currency has risen sharply since September, when it was trading for around \$1.20, over persistent concerns about the ballooning U.S. trade and budget deficits.

With no end to those problems in sight, analysts see the trend continuing.

The euro initially fell against the dollar after its 1999 debut, but it has risen about 63 percent since bottoming out at 82 U.S. cents in October 2000.

The Commerce Department reported that consumer spending grew by a modest 0.2 percent in November, slightly weaker than the 0.3 percent that had been forecast by analysts and far short of the 0.8 percent reported for October.

At the same time, incomes

grew 0.3 percent in November, more than the 0.2 percent that had been forecast. Still, income growth was weaker than in October, when it hit 0.6 percent.

The euro spike following the mixed news may have something to do with the small amount of trading just before Christmas, Hughes said.

The U.S. administration says it has a "strong dollar" policy but also that it will let market forces set the currency's strength. Most analysts believe the U.S. is content to let the dollar fall because it has been making American exports cheaper.

However, Europe's fragile economic recovery is export-driven, and the strong euro has either been making European goods more expensive overseas or cutting into producers' profits as they try to hold prices steady.

European Central Bank President Jean-Claude Trichet has called the rapid increase in the euro's strength both "unwelcome" and "brutal." However, the bank has yet to take the next step and intervene in currency markets to halt the euro's slide.

The pound was trading at \$1.9179 and the dollar bought 103.90 Japanese yen at midafternoon in Europe.

Seasons Greetings, Sgt. Delbert Jensen

Your friends and co-workers at Noramco want to wish you a Happy Holiday!



Santa unable to reply to mail from kids due to budget cuts

The Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — It's hardly the most wonderful time of the year for Santa and his helpers in Greenland.

And some 25,000 children worldwide who sent the jolly elf their wish list and Christmas card won't find any reply because St. Nick's cash crunch has meant no money for stamps from the local government.

Since 2002, Santa Claus of Greenland no longer gets the annual 1.7 million kroner (\$306,000) from the government to pay for replies to the estimated 25,000 letters he receives every year. The chubby Santa's subsidy was lost amid the island government's overall belt tightening.

The company, which is staffed by volunteers, is beside itself. "We have been forced to do this," said Anders Laesoe, who identified himself as Santa's aide. "It's a sad and terrible thing for children who don't understand this."

Despite the nearness to Christmas Day, Laesoe said Thursday the company, based in Nuk, Greenland, is looking for help from individuals and sponsors for next year.

Greenland, like Finland, Sweden and Norway, claims to be the real home of Santa and markets him as an ambassador for the island territory.

Fake-degrees problem

HANOI, Vietnam — More than 1,700 policemen in Vietnam have been caught using fake degrees and certificates to get promotions and raises, state-controlled media reported Thursday.

A total of 1,076 got demoted and another 97 were dismissed from the police force for falsifying their education and training, the Pioneer newspaper said.

Some in the police force did not get an official education and they had to go to part-time classes and other training in order to get salary raises, he said.

Major heroin bust

HONG KONG — A Sierra Leone man who swallowed 74 pellets of heroin was arrested at Hong Kong's airport for alleged drug smuggling, the government said Thursday.

Customs officers arrested the 33-year-old man on Wednesday, when he arrived from Pakistan, the government said in a statement. He had planned to travel to the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou.

The suspect will be charged with trafficking in a dangerous drug, the government said.

From The Associated Press

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OPINION

We have met the enemy in Iraq, and he isn't us

BY CLIFFORD D. MAY

Scripps Howard

When the Army of Ansar al Sunna, a group tied to al-Qaida, attacks an American base near Mosul, it should be apparent that Iraq is the front line in the war on terrorism.

When Christian churches are bombed, as they were on the same day as the mosque in the southern part of Iraq, and Shiite mosques in Karbala and Najaf are targeted as well, it should be clear that the bombers are waging a most unholily war.

When Iraqi election workers are shot dead in the streets, as they were last week-end, the murderers' hatred for democracy ought to be obvious.

Yet somehow the debate goes on about whether those fighting us are really enemies of freedom, about whether it is imperative they be defeated.

The charge that Americans came to Iraq to steal oil is not much heard these days. Instead, the suicide bombers and throat-slitters are romanticized "militants" — or even "nationalists" and "patriots" — who are "resisting American occupation."

When those "militants" do something particularly barbaric — summarily executing civilians, blowing up police stations, beheading aid workers — the conversation never dwells long on their crimes. Instead, controversy swirls around America's failure to control "the security situation."

Then, too, there are those who do not defend the killers but argue that the continuing carnage proves the United States can't overcome this foe. What's the point of a military

machine that can topple Saddam Hussein in a few weeks but has to give Iraq back to his cronies a few years later? Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, much criticized late last year, appears to understand this. A few days ago, he frankly acknowledged the urgent need to "develop a military designed to meet the challenges of this era."

The military we have now, he explained, "is, in many ways, still organized, trained and equipped for the more conventional challenges of the past century, when wars were conducted largely between large navies, armies and air forces."

Our current enemies, by contrast, are fighting an "unconventional" war. The combatants who attacked Forward Operating Base Max outside Mosul were not attempting to win a battle in the conventional sense; they did not hope to seize the camp any more than the suicide-terrorists who attacked on Sept. 11 planned to station tanks in New York and Washington.

Instead, the goal of terrorists is simply to slaughter and, of course, terrorize. By so doing, they mean to destroy our will to fight. Lose the will to fight and, by definition, you have been defeated, no matter how high-tech your weaponry, no matter how many troops you have riding in armored Humvees.

On a visit to Iraq this week, British Prime Minister Tony Blair succinctly characterized the state of this conflict. "There surely is only one side to be on in what is now very clearly a battle between democracy and terror," he said.

On the one side, you have people who desperately want to make the democratic process work and want to have the same type of



democratic freedoms other parts of the world enjoy. And on the other side, people who are killing and intimidating and trying to destroy a better future for Iraq. ... Our response should be to stand alongside the democrats — the people who've got the courage to see this thing through — and help them see it through. I've got no doubt at all that is the right thing for us to do."

The enemy in Iraq is brutal, ruthless and, yes, evil. But they are not stupid. They know that every time they stage a massacre, millions of people get angry, not at them, but at Don Rumsfeld and President Bush and Prime Minister Blair and the "neo-cons."

"We have seen ... the weakness of the American soldier who is ... unprepared to fight long wars," Osama bin Laden said in 1998, as he began contemplating his next attack. "It also proves they can run in less than 24 hours, and this was also repeated in Somalia. We are ready for all occasions."

Only when the kind of butchery we witnessed this week strengthens, rather than weakens, our resolve will the barbarians see that the road they have chosen is a dead end — figuratively and literally.

Clifford D. May is the president of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, a policy institute focusing on terrorism.

Laurels for crossing the Delaware are legitimate

WASHINGTON
It's get this straight: The greatest Christmas in American history was not the result of the Germans being drunk or hung over. Gen. George Washington lost most of his battles

George Will



— it has been said the Revolutionary War was won by brilliant re-creating — so let's not diminish any of his victories, and certainly not the one without which American independence probably would have been extinguished like a candle in a gale.

Among the many things that "everyone knows" that just are not so is that the 2,400 men of the Continental Army won the Battle of Trenton, an operation that began on the night of Dec. 25, 1776, because the Hessian mercenaries had partaken too vigorously of Christmas drink. According to David Hack-ett Fischer, whose "Washington's Crossing" was a finalist for the 2004 National Book Award, the Hessians were weary from a week of constant vigilance against attacks by local insurgents, but fought well.

Not well enough, however, to prevent what Fischer, a Brandeis historian, says was "combined, over the next eight days, with a second battle of Trenton and the Battle of Princeton — the most important victory in U.S. military history. Since the Declaration of Independence on July 4, the Americans had lost every battle fought to make independence a fact. The military disasters inflicted by 33,000 British and German troops in what is now Brooklyn, and on Manhattan Island, contributed to Washington losing 90 percent of his army. New Jersey's loyalty was tilting toward the crown.

By marching his shivering men to the banks of the ice-clogged Delaware River, and making the crossing that became the subject of the most familiar American painting, Washington risked everything. Had he lost the gamble — had his men been repulsed from Trenton and pinned against the river — the continent would have been lost ... and subsequent world history would have been very different.

In New York, Washington had wept while watching through a spyglass as the British massacred Americans who had surrendered. But Washington, Fischer writes, "often reminded his men that they were an army of liberty and freedom, and that the rights of humanity for which they were fighting should extend even to their enemies." To the American officer in charge of 221 prisoners taken at Princeton, Washington said, "Treat them with humanity, and let them have no reason to complain of our copying

the brutal example of the British army in their treatment of our unfortunate brethren." ... As historian Edmund Morgan says, Washington had "made the war itself an example of what the Revolution meant."

Dining with Washington after surrendering to him at Yorktown, Gen. Charles Cornwallis, who had commanded the forces at Princeton that rushed to relieve Trenton, offered this toast: "Fame will gather your brightest laurels rather than from the banks of the Delaware than from those of the Chesapeake."

Unfortunately, many small historians believe their function is to deny large men any laurels. Fischer sternly reprimands such historians who have "served us ill." In the late twentieth century, too many scholars tried to make the American past into a record of crime and folly. Too many writers have told us we are captives of our darker selves and helpless victims of our history. It isn't so,

and never was."

One reason Americans have made so much history is that they have never believed in History. One of the unfortunate intellectual developments of the 19th century, principally in Europe, was the transformation of history into a proper noun. It denoted a vast impersonal force with its own unfolding logic. ... Marxism was the most consequential doctrine of historical inevitability, but there were others.

Such theories induce fatalism by diminishing mankind's sense of agency. They mock the idea of great people, and the belief that the free choices of small groups could knock History out of its preordained grooves. Such ideas have largely lost their ability to seize imaginations. ... Still, it is exhilarating to be reminded by historians just how radically wrong the historicists were, and are.

George Will is a member of Washington Post Writers Group.

Mallard Fillmore



BY BRUCE TINSLEY

AFRTS Television Schedule

Updated sports listings are available on the first Scoreboard page in the sports section or AFN's Web site at <http://mvafn.dodmedia.osd.mil>

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2004

	(AFN-FAMILY)	(AFN-MUSIC)	(AFN-EUROPE)	(AFN-KOREA)	(AFN-NEWS)	(AFN-SPORTS)	(SPECTRUM)	(AFN-PACIFIC)
9:00	Movies *** A Very Merry Family	Movies *** "A Season for Miracles" (1999) Carla Gugino. A woman gives her jailed sister's children a real Christmas.	Dr. Phil	Jacqueline	Nightline	College Football (Pac/Pac/Pac)	Burt Wolf: Tales of Freedom	Jacqueline
9:30	Comedy Whoopi Goldberg		(8:45) Oprah Winfrey	Headline News	Headline News	Fort Worth Bowl - Cincinnati vs. Marshall. From Fort Worth, Texas. (Taped)	Easy Entertaining-Charlevoix	Headline News
10:00	Santa Claus is Coming to Town		(3:35) Guiding Light	Headline News	Headline News		Decorating Cities	ESPN News
11:00	Stanley	16:30 Movie *** "American Graffiti" (1973) Richard Dreyfuss. Teenagers in 1962 California pond their fantasies.	(1:17) General Hospital	Headline News	The O'Reilly Factor		The Look for Less	Pacific Report
11:30	Dora the Explorer		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Home & Garden: Santa's Christmas	Headline News
12:00	The Wiggles		Headline News	Movies *** "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946; Fantasy)	Headline News		The King of Queens	Movies *** "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946; Fantasy)
13:00	Kidney's Christmas Carol	Movies *** "Miracle on 34th Street" (1947; Comedy)	Judge Judy	Headline News	Headline News		Girls	Headline News
13:30	Miracle on 34th Street	Maureen O'Hara, Macy's Christmas	Top Medical Forensic: It's Cop Time: Keran Thompson	Headline News	Headline News	College Football Pioneer Pac-Water Line: UCLA vs. UCLA vs. Wyoming. From Las Vegas. (Taped)	The Day the Magic Die	Headline News
14:00	Fennel Home Videos	2:47 Movie *** "Parent-hood" (1989) Steve Martin. A family experiences the joys of raising children.	Teacher's Pet (El)	Pacific Report	Headline News		Aly McBeal "Reach Out and Touch a Feeling"	Pacific Report
15:00	Full House	Headline News	What's New Scooby-Do?	The Tonight Show	Headline News		Any Day Now M.E. holds out for a footy verdict	The Tonight Show
16:00	Pokemon		Ozzy & Drix	Late Show	American Morning			Late Show
16:30	Yu-Gi-Oh		The Brothers Garcia	Access Hollywood	CNN Live Today	SportsCenter	ER "A Boy Falling Out of the Sky"	Access Hollywood
17:00	Johnny's Christmas Carol	Faith Hill Revisited	Jacqueline	Headline News	Headline News	NFL Game of the Week	Law & Order "Haven"	Headline News
17:30	Christmas Finestone		Headline News	The Late Late Show	Headline News		The Late Late Show	Headline News
18:00	Rugrats Christmas in a mountain cabin	Hollywood Backlisters	ESPN News	Headline News	Headline News	Inside the NFL	The Simpsons	Headline News
18:30	A Scooby-Do Christmas	Entertainment Tonight	AFN Evening News	Headline News	Headline News	PrimeTime Thursday	Everybody Loves Raymond	Dennis Miller
19:00	Barbie in the Nutcracker	Movies *** "Scrooged" (1983) Bill Murray, Kristin Allen. A heartless newspaper executive learns the folly of his ways.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	ESPN News	Christmas "Crimis and Witcher"	Headline News
20:00			Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	NFL Live	Headline News	Headline News
20:30			Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	ESPN News	Boston Public "Chapter Forty"	Headline News
21:00	Movies *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2000) Jim Carrey. The evil Grinch plots to ruin Christmas in Whoville.	Movies *** "Maid in Manhattan" (2002) Jennifer Lopez. A politician mistakes a hotel maid for a wealthy woman.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	NFL Pregame (Live)	Headline News	Entertainment Studios.com
21:30			Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	NFL Football "Sun Day Back" at Minnesota Vikings	Sea Planet: Seal of Life	Good Morning America
22:00			The Tonight Show	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	Friends	Headline News
22:30	Home Improvement		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	Seinfeld "The Burning"	Headline News
23:00	Home Improvement		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	The Day Show	Headline News
23:30			Late Show	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2004

00:00	Rugrats	11:00	Movie *** "Mo'Nasty"	11:30	Late Show	To Be Announced	Headline News	Gravity Games From Cleveland	Late Night	To Be Announced
00:30	Frosty the Snowman	11:41	Movie *** "Batman Returns" (1992, Adventure)	11:50	Access Hollywood	Headline News	NBC Nightly News	Gravity Games From Cleveland	Late Night	To Be Announced
1:00	A Scary-Go Christmas	12:00	Movie *** "The Grinch" (2002, Comedy)	12:00	College Football Sheraton	Headline News	ABC World News Tonight	Charles "C'mes and W'ch-Dances"	1:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
1:30	Scrabble in the Nutcracker	12:05	Movie *** "The Grinch" (2002, Comedy)	12:05	College Football Sheraton	Headline News	NBC Evening News	Bornum Capital "Chapter Forty"	1:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
2:00		12:10	Movie *** "The Grinch" (2002, Comedy)	12:10	College Football Sheraton	Headline News	The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer	Blair Paint: Seas of Life	2:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
2:30		12:15	Movie *** "The Grinch" (2002, Comedy)	12:15	College Football Sheraton	Headline News	Hannity & Colmes	Blair Paint: Seas of Life	2:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
3:00	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)	12:20	Movie *** "The Grinch" (2002, Comedy)	12:20	College Football Sheraton	Headline News	Headline News	Blair Paint: Seas of Life	3:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
3:30		12:25	Movie *** "The Grinch" (2002, Comedy)	12:25	College Football Sheraton	Headline News	Nightly Business Report	Blair Paint: Seas of Life	3:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
4:00		12:30	Movie *** "The Grinch" (2002, Comedy)	12:30	College Football Sheraton	Headline News	Lou Dobbs Tonight	Blair Paint: Seas of Life	4:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
5:00	Elmo Saves Christmas	12:35	Movie *** "The Grinch" (2002, Comedy)	12:35	College Football Sheraton	Headline News	ESPN	Blair Paint: Seas of Life	5:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
5:30		12:40	Movie *** "The Grinch" (2002, Comedy)	12:40	College Football Sheraton	Headline News	ESPN	Blair Paint: Seas of Life	5:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
6:00	Pooh and Christmas	12:45	Movie *** "The Grinch" (2002, Comedy)	12:45	College Football Sheraton	Headline News	ESPN	Blair Paint: Seas of Life	6:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
6:30	Blue's Clues Christmas	12:50	Movie *** "The Grinch" (2002, Comedy)	12:50	College Football Sheraton	Headline News	ESPN	Blair Paint: Seas of Life	6:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
7:00	Planet's Funniest Animals	12:55	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)	Newsnight With Aaron Brown	Gravity Games From Cleveland	7:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
7:30	Amazing Animal Videos	1:00	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)	BET Nightly News	Gravity Games From Cleveland	7:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
8:00	Little & Sitch's Christmas	1:05	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)	Tavis Smiley	Gravity Games From Cleveland	8:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
8:30	Teamo Supremo (E)	1:10	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)	Air Force TV News	Gravity Games From Cleveland	8:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
9:00	Static Shock "She-Bang"	1:15	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)	Harbhall With Chris Matthews	Gravity Games From Cleveland	9:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
9:30	Teen Titans "Only Human"	1:20	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)	The O'Reilly Factor	Gravity Games From Cleveland	9:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
10:00	Teen Titans "Only Human"	1:25	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	10:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
10:30	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	1:30	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	10:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
11:00	Dragonball GT	1:35	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	11:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
11:30	Justice League	1:40	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	11:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
12:00	Teen Kids News (E)	1:45	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	12:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
12:30	Interstella "Tid" (E)	1:50	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	12:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
13:00	Endurance "Final Mission"	1:55	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	13:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
13:30	Scout's Safari "Scoutland"	2:00	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	13:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
14:00	Skunked TV Chuck drops some rare bird eggs.	2:05	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	14:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
14:30	most Extreme Mother Nature's most Extreme of disgrace	2:10	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	14:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
15:00	Herocules: The Legendary Journeys	2:15	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	15:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
16:30	The Siege at Nagano	2:20	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	16:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
17:00	Full Moon	2:25	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	17:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
17:30	Happy Days	2:30	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	17:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
18:00	SpongeBob SquarePants	2:35	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	18:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
18:30	A Scooby-Go Christmas	2:40	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	18:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
19:00	Movie "Eddie at Christmas"	2:45	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	19:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
19:30	Movie "Eddie at Christmas"	2:50	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	19:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
20:00	Movie "Eddie at Christmas"	2:55	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	20:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
20:30	Movie "Eddie at Christmas"	3:00	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	20:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
21:00	Movie "Eddie at Christmas"	3:05	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	21:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
21:30	Movie "Eddie at Christmas"	3:10	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	21:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
22:00	Movie "Eddie at Christmas"	3:15	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	22:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
22:30	Movie "Eddie at Christmas"	3:20	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	22:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
23:00	Movie "Eddie at Christmas"	3:25	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	23:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"
23:30	Movie "Eddie at Christmas"	3:30	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	23:30	Movie *** "Home Alone"
24:00	Movie "Eddie at Christmas"	3:35	Movie *** "White Christmas" (1954, Fred. Marx, Dick. Kaye)	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Movie *** "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2002, Jim Carrey)		Gravity Games From Cleveland	24:00	Movie *** "Home Alone"

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FACES

'Fat' Alley teams with Jenny Craig

"Fat Actress" star Kirstie Alley has signed a deal to appear in ads for the Jenny Craig weight-management program.

Alley, who has said she wants to lose the weight that prompted her new Showtime series, will star in Jenny Craig Inc.'s 2005 advertising campaign. The TV commercials will begin airing Jan. 10, the Carlsbad, Calif.-based company announced Monday. Terms of the deal weren't disclosed.

"I had a great time getting fat and now I'm going to have an even greater time losing weight," Alley, 53, said in a statement.

"I had four offers from other companies, but I wanted to go with the ... one that I knew would work — and, let's face it, Jenny Craig's food is hands-down the yummiest."

Alley's goal is to lose more than 50 pounds. The commercials will follow Alley's progress. The Emmy-winning actress, who starred in television's "Cheers" and "Veronica's Closet," will also keep a weekly blog on the company's Web site.

Her Showtime series premieres in March.

Berlin Film Festival set for February

The annual Berlin Film Festival will open in February with the world premiere of French director Regis Wargnier's "Man to Man," a historical adventure epic that stars Joseph Fiennes and Kristin Scott Thomas.

"Man to Man" is a French-British co-production that tells the story of a group of anthropologists on a trip to South Africa in the 1870s to look for the connection between man and apes.

Wargnier, whose "Indochine" won the best foreign film Oscar in 1993, wrote the screenplay along with Ghanaian-born author William Boyd, festival organizers said in a statement Tuesday. The movie also stars Iain Glen, Hugh Bonneville and Flora Montgomery.

Organizers gave no details of other movies that will run alongside "Man to Man" in the competition for the festival's top honor, the Golden Bear. The film will kick off the festival — the 55th — on Feb. 10, and the event runs through Feb. 20.

Singer: Drugs fun but fattening

Pop singer Robbie Williams said he would still be taking drugs if they didn't make him fat.

"I'd still be doing it if I didn't blow up to the size of an aircraft hanger, you know, because it was a great time," the bad-boy British pop star told Real Radio.

"Some of the best times in my life happened under the influence of drugs ... and I'm not saying 'go out and do drugs, kids,' but I enjoyed them," Williams said in the interview to air on Christmas Day.

Williams first made a name for himself on the British pop scene as a member of Take That, one of the most successful boy bands of the '90s.

He reportedly fell into drugs after splitting from the group to launch a solo career. His addiction became so bad that fellow pop star Elton John intervened to send him to a rehabilitation clinic.

Asked whether he was confident about staying away from drugs and alcohol, Williams, now 30, replied: "No, I'm not confident at all."

Ashlee Simpson ready to headline

Ashlee Simpson, whose appearance on NBC's "Saturday Night Live" went awry in a do-es-she-or-doesn't-she lip-synch moment, will go on the road next year in her first headlining tour.

The tour, scheduled to start Feb. 18 in Los Angeles, will include shows in Seattle, Denver, Chicago, New York, Atlanta and Dallas, Geffen Records announced last week.

Simpson, who released her debut album, "Autobiography," earlier this year, will host the West Coast portion of ABC's "New Year's Rockin' Eve" on Dec. 31. The 20-year-old singer also will perform at the Orange Bowl halftime show in Miami on Jan. 4.



Alley

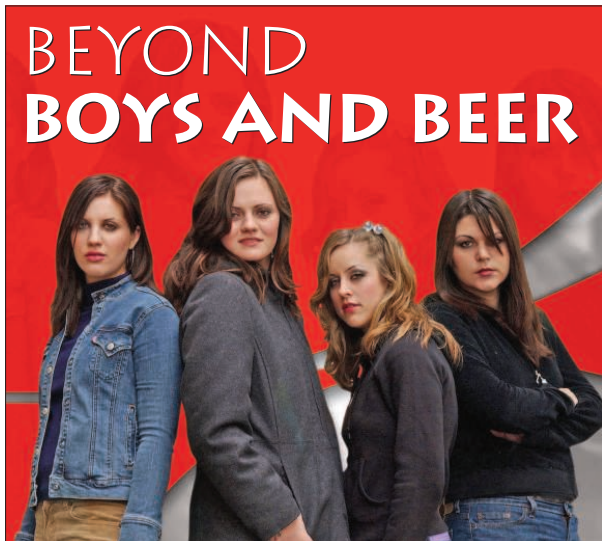


Williams



Simpson

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



The Donnas want to be known as a rock band, not just a group of girls with guitars

BY SUSAN CARPENTER

Los Angeles Times

HOLLYWOOD — To hear the Donnas, you'd think they spent all their free time pinching boys' bottoms or shoving them out of the way. They seem like a gang with much as a band — a tight-knit clique snapping gum, smoking Marlboros and emasculating every man they meet.

See them outside of their records, and their reputation as Fabul-swalling, sex-crazed party animals quickly disintegrates. Trail them for an evening and you won't see them putting out cigarettes in men's drinks or writing their numbers on napkins in lipstick.

Members of the Bay Area quartet are just regular girls — best friends who like to sip iced tea, eat candy and watch "The O.C." Most of them even have long-term boyfriends, even if those boys are taking a back seat to the band these days while the Donnas promote their sixth and latest record, "Gold Medal."

On the eve of the record's release, Donnas A, C, R and F are at Hollywood's Bel Age Hotel having a quick dinner. In 15 minutes they'll be heading to "Jimmy Kimmel Live" for an outdoor performance, followed by a midnight meet-and-greet at Tower Records and the official kickoff of what most likely will be a yearlong tour.

Donna R (Allison Robertson) is concentrating on her Cobb salad while Donna A (Brett Anderson) samples a shrimp dumpling that Donna F (Maya Ford) has warned is no good. Donna C (Torry Castellano) jokes about seeing her "good friend" actor Jason Schwartzman, who is a guest on "Kimmel." The entire group laughs, knowing she's met him only once.

Like the image they project on their records, the Donnas like to have a good time. But the devil-may-care vibe in their songs is an act — one that's at odds with their real-life ambitions. Two years ago, they made the leap to Atlantic Records after five years with Lookout, the Berkeley-based indie label that signed them as teens. More mature as musicians and as women, they're now 25 and looking to ratchet up their career. It isn't so easy.

"We're taken less seriously now," says Anderson, a singer whose Sandra Dee good looks are at odds with her sneering vocals. "Every time we get reviewed in Rolling Stone, I feel like they're reviewing our first album. They might like it, but what they say about it is: hair metal. I'm like, 'Are you listening to the same album we just put out?'"

Listeners familiar with the blunt-talking, come-hither-go-away guitar rock on their 1999 breakthrough "Get Skintight" or even their major label 2002 debut "Spend the Night" will hear some differences on "Gold Medal." The songs are slightly slower, to compensate for the tendinitis Castellano was diagnosed with last summer.

Slicker than their previous albums, thanks to Avril Lavigne producer Butch Walker, the record is also less venomous. Anderson's vocals don't sound threatening so much as unimpressed. Lyrically, there isn't nearly as much shut-up-and-get-naked sass, but they can still throw a mean punch. On "Out of My Hands," they dish: "I may not be a man, but you're not one either. It takes one to know one."

The Donnas' unique brand of snotty rock defies easy classification, but because they're a girl band — a rare breed these days — they are compared with the few other women who've climbed on to the charts.

"Everyone from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs to Britney Spears to Ashlee Simpson to Avril Lavigne. Anyone who's a female," says Castellano, a drummer who now wears a wrist brace. "Guy bands out there like the Strokes or the Vines, people would never compare them to the Backstreet Boys. And yet we are in that position."

A decade ago, when the Donnas formed a band at their Palo Alto high school, it seemed like radio couldn't get enough female artists on the air. On the commercial end of the dial, Hole and L7 reigned supreme; out left, it was PJ Harvey, Liz Phair, Bikini Kill and Babes in Toyland. Women rocked, and radio loved them.

It's a different climate these days. The Donnas have been college radio faves for years, but they get almost no air time on commercial stations.

"It's funny because I feel like the same thing we were going up against when we were first starting out, we're still going up against," Castellano says. "When we first started out, it was a lot more blatant because the guys at our school were like: 'Girls can't play. Go home and play with your dolls.' Now it's a little more subtle. No one actually comes up to us and says, 'Girls can't play.' They say, 'We just don't really play girls on rock radio.'"

Hours later, the four of them are onstage, doped up in tight jeans, revealing tops and hairdos fresh from the curling iron, walking the fine line between staying true to themselves and working to win the hearts and minds of a new audience. Performing a cut from their new record, Anderson sings the truth: "Just have to wait and see."



KEY: Sunny Pt. Cls. Mostly clsy. Cloudy Showers Tstorms Rain Rain/snow Snow Cold frnt. Warm frnt. Occluded Trough High Low High

AFRICA

Capetown	84	10	Mogadishu	89	75
Dakar	86	69	Nairobi	81	65
Freeport	88	74	Rabat	64	48
Kinshasa	86	72	Tripoli	68	48

THE WORLD

Amsterdam	47	33	Manila	86	74
Bahran	86	69	Mexico City	73	64
Beijing	32	19	Montreal	18	4
Bombay	82	62	Riyadh	82	62
Buenos Aires	71	66	Rio de Jan	83	72
Buenos Aires	71	66	Sao Paulo	80	68
Calcutta	88	72	Sofia	47	24
Chengdu	62	40	Sydney	68	68
Hong Kong	74	55	Tokyo	54	43

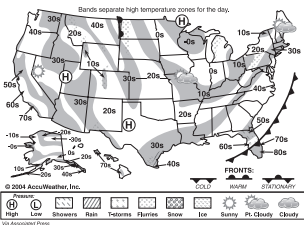
TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

Alaska, Tex.	Hi	Lo	Okla.	Hi	Lo
Alaska, Tex.	26	19	Okla.	33	14
Alaska, Tex.	15	3	Alaska, Tex.	28	15
Alaska, Tex.	26	19	Alaska, Tex.	47	35
Alaska, Tex.	32	19	Alaska, Tex.	28	15
Alaska, Tex.	32	19	Alaska, Tex.	28	15
Alaska, Tex.	32	19	Alaska, Tex.	28	15
Alaska, Tex.	32	19	Alaska, Tex.	28	15
Alaska, Tex.	32	19	Alaska, Tex.	28	15
Alaska, Tex.	32	19	Alaska, Tex.	28	15



THE UNITED STATES TODAY

As of noon, Eastern U.S. time



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Mostly cloudy with rain/snow. Highs in the 40s, Tuesday lows in the 30s.

Britain, Ireland: Mostly cloudy with rain/snow. Highs in the mid-40s to lower 50s, Tuesday lows in the mid-30s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Mostly cloudy with morning fog. Highs in the 30s, Tuesday lows in the upper 20s.

France: Mostly cloudy with rain/snow. Highs in the 50s, Tuesday lows in the 20s to 30s.

Northern Germany: Mostly cloudy with rain/snow. Highs in the mid-50s to lower 60s.

Southern Germany: Cloudy with rain. Highs in the 40s, Tuesday lows in the mid-30s.

Hungary: Mostly cloudy with isolated rain/snow. Highs in the upper 40s, Tuesday lows in the mid-30s.

Northern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the 40s, Tuesday lows in the upper 20s.

Southern Italy: Partly cloudy with isolated rain/snow. Highs in the upper 50s to lower 60s, Tuesday lows in the mid to upper 40s.

Kosovo: Mostly cloudy with morning fog. Highs in the 30s, Tuesday lows in the 20s.

Norway: Mostly cloudy with rain/snow. Highs in the 20s, Tuesday lows in the lower to mid 10s.

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid-50s, Tuesday lows in the 30s.

Turkey: Mostly cloudy with rain/snow. Highs in the lower 50s to mid 40s, Tuesday lows in the low to mid 40s.

For current weather watches, warnings, and daily forecasts go to the USAF Operational Weather Squadron home page at: <http://www.ombach.af.mil>
<http://www.ombach.af.mil>

SUN & MOON

Sunrise (Baghdad)	7:03AM	Tuesday
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	8:24AM	8:24AM
Sunset (Baghdad)	5:03PM	5:03PM
Sunset (Frankfurt)	8:24PM	8:25PM

Full moon 28 Dec 04 Last of 3 Jan 05 New moon 12 Jan 05 First of 17 Jan 05

Scheduled to ETS or PCS?

Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your new station.

STARS & STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper

Flu shot eligibility

RI PROVIDENCE — The state Department of Health lowered the age of eligibility for flu shots to 65 from 75, as it anticipates shipments of about 30,000 more doses. The department has given shots to most of those 75 and older. The federal government recommended giving shots to people who are at least 50, but health officials said the state doesn't have enough vaccine.

Freeman to be honored

MS GREENWOOD — Actor Morgan Freeman will be inducted into the Greenwood-Lechore County Chamber of Commerce's Hall of Fame at the annual February meeting. Freeman is a Memphis native but spent some of his early years in Greenwood. Gov. Haley Barbour is scheduled to deliver the meeting's keynote address.

Flat toll in case of strike

OH CLEVELAND — The Ohio Turnpike Commission authorized flat toll rates if workers strike. The three-year contract for 700 toll workers and 200 maintenance employees was extended to Jan. 17. The turnpike director said the key negotiation issue is the commission's request that workers pay 10 percent of health care costs. The toll for Interstate 80 now depends on the distance driven.

New policy for police

WA SEATTLE — City police officers now need permission from their commanders to take off-duty jobs. Chief Gil Kerlikowske issued the policy to respond to a conflict of interest problems exposed by officers working at nightclubs with drug and prostitution problems. About 400 of the city's 1,200 officers work off duty.

Costume stolen, returned

VT BURLINGTON — "Buddy" the blood drop is back but his kidnapping still has not been solved.

American Red Cross employees in Burlington were frantic when they realized someone had stolen their mascot, "Buddy," a 5-foot-tall blood drop costume that is worn to promote local blood drives.

Buddy was left propped up on a stand outside a bloodmobile in the parking lot of a downtown Burlington grocery store. When a Red Cross worker went back to check on it, the costume was gone.

"I know the girl responsible for him was a little on the freaked side," said Red Cross scheduler Jill McCarter. "I mean, how do you tell your boss you just lost \$3,000?"

The local Red Cross purchased the high-tech mascot, which has built-in air conditioning, about a year ago to attract more donors.

Buddy did come back, anonymously returned to the chapter.

Inmate shot in leg

VA STAFFORD — An inmate was shot in the leg by an officer during an escape attempt outside the Rappahannock Regional Jail, Stafford County Sheriff Charles Jett said.

The deputy suffered cuts and



bruises on his head and face, but his injuries were not life-threatening, Jett said. The inmate and the deputy, whose names were not released, were taken to Mary Washington Hospital.

Jett said the inmate was being transferred back to jail in a patrol car after a court hearing outside Stafford when he broke through a protective barrier and attacked the officer, who was driving.

During the struggle, the vehicle went up and down an embankment, striking a rock culvert and causing the air bags to deploy. The deputy shot the inmate in the upper leg, and jail officers helped take the prisoner into custody, Jett said.

Charitable baby shower

NE OMAHA — The children at St. Bernadette School held a baby shower for Shane Edward Kielion Jr. He was born Nov. 15, the same day his U.S. Marine father was killed in Iraq. Mother April Kielion says she wasn't going to celebrate Christmas this year, but her son is because of the efforts of so many people. School counselor Linda Reese says students collected disposable diapers, baby clothing, bedding, gift cards and more than \$700.

Attacked minister dies

IN WHITELAND — A 72-year-old minister died Tuesday, two days after being at-



Swinging Santa

Taking a break from delivering toys to needy children, Santa, aka Officer W.G. Smith with the Greenville Police Department, finds time for a little recreation at Glendale Apartments in Greenville, N.C.

tacked and choked in front of the altar by a man who called him "the devil," police said. The Rev. Bill McElroy of Missionary Baptist Church had been hospitalized since the attack, which took place as church members were arriving for Sunday services.

David J. Cooper, 40, was jailed on suspicion of attempted murder and other offenses.

Police said the charges would be upgraded to murder. "I choked him until I knew he was not breathing," Cooper told police, according to court papers. "I couldn't kill a human being. I was killing the devil."

The two men had known each other for some 20 years. The minister had presided at Cooper's 1985 wedding, church members said.

Fine for gorilla escape

TX DALLAS — A \$10,000 fine from federal regulators against the city over the March escape of a gorilla from the Dallas Zoo will be paid, the mayor says.

Mayor Laura Miller said that she disagreed with the fine levied by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. But Miller said, after a closed City Council executive session, that the city will pay it to avoid a protracted dispute with the USDA, which regulates the nation's zoos.

Zoo officials have said that 13-year-old Jahari, a 340-pound gorilla, leaped across a moat and wall before going on a 40-minute rampage. Four people were injured before police shot and killed the gorilla.

Rabid fox stabbed

NH HENNIKER — Two Massachusetts men, including one who stabbed a fox that attacked a Christmas gathering, are receiving injections for rabies.

Roy Ely, 50, of Haverhill, Mass., stabbed the animal to death with a butcher knife after the fox leapt out of the woods and into a group leaving a party.

John Allen, 51, of Holden, Mass., was scratched on the leg and, like Ely, is receiving injections to guard against rabies. Ely was not sure if the three other people who came into contact with the fox decided to get shots.

The fox is the third animal in town in two months to test positive for rabies, a viral disease that affects the central nervous system and can be fatal to humans if left untreated.

Security guard arrested

NV RENO — An unemployed security guard suspected of terrorizing community leaders with death threats, late-laced graffiti and random shootings has been arrested in California, police said.

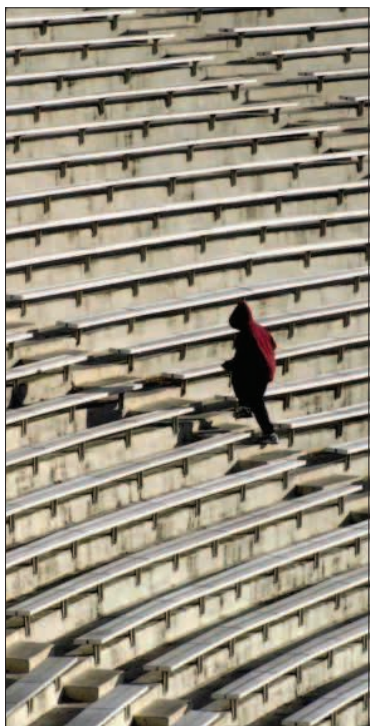
Gary C. Rosales, 43, of Reno, was arrested in Whittier, Calif., where he was being held on seven felony counts of shooting a firearm into homes in southwest Reno. No one was injured.

Additional charges are expected as the investigation continues, authorities said. No motive has been established and bail was set at \$250,000.

The crime spree began in 1999 with death threats targeting the county district attorney, the former Reno police chief and other officers and their families, authorities said.



Light through the fog A low-hanging fog on the surface of Lake Champlain shrouds the lighthouse on the northern end of the Burlington, Vt., breakwater.



Running solo

Exercise for this solo runner consists of running up the steps of Wallace Wade Stadium on the campus of Duke University on a cold Tuesday morning in Durham, N.C.



Scared by Santa

T'Kiyah Ferguson, 1, left, reacts as police Officer Terance Scott, dressed as Santa Claus, enters the Community Child Care Center in Delray Beach, Fla., for a pre-Christmas visit to deliver toys to the children who were eating lunch.



Tubular!

Jason Lombardi, 7, and sister Gina, 5, spend the first day of winter tubing in Page Park in Bristol, Conn.



Football fun

Lee Woods, right, makes the catch as Reese Mardis defends as they play football in Oxford, Miss.



Engineer in training

Andrew Kekel, 3, plays with the switches on the Lionel train display in Chesterfield Township, Mich.

Medic posts diary online

IN KNOXVILLE — A medic with the 278th Regimental Combat Team is posting an online diary from Iraq. Second Lt. Lance Frizzell of Murfreesboro says he hopes his blog, posted at <http://iraq.billohobs.com/>, will ease the minds of unit members' families and friends back home. About 3,000 members of the Tennessee Army National Guard are in the unit.

Enclave may get face lift

MI EAST LANSING — The student enclave off the Michigan State University campus known as Cedar Village could be in for a face lift. City and school officials and area property owners are close to completing a long-term master plan that would bring housing designed to appeal to a variety of people. Five student riots have occurred in the area over the past two decades.

Car crashes into store

WA PUYALLUP — A fast-traveling car smashed backward into a busy variety store, winding up about 150 feet inside and injuring seven people, one seriously.

The 67-year-old driver put the 1980s-vintage Lincoln Town Car into reverse and rammed into the suburban Seattle store, witnesses said. The driver and his wife were not hurt.

Deputies were looking into the driver's statement that the vehicle had a mechanical problem, said sheriff's spokesman Ed Troyer.

One person was taken to a local hospital in serious condition, KING-TV News reported. Six other people were also taken to area hospitals.

Crews worked to clean up debris and make repairs to the store, part of a variety and supermarket chain.

Boy's present stolen

VA CULPEPER — A Culpeper County first-grader's new four-wheeler was stolen when he participated in "Shop With a Cop," a seasonal program for underprivileged children, authorities said.

Jacques Simmons, 7, was shopping at Wal-Mart as part of the program sponsored by the Culpeper County Sheriff's Office when the all-terrain vehicle disappeared from his grandmother's home.

"He tried to be a little trooper and not cry, but ... he cried himself to sleep," said Aliene Veneay, his grandmother.

Veneay said Jacques received the \$1,900 four-wheeler from his father for his birthday Dec. 1. She said Jacques is a hemophiliac, so "there are not too many sports and things he can do. He could ride the four-wheeler because it did not go too fast."

The Sheriff's Office has no suspects, a spokesman said.

Bronze bull for sale

NY NEW YORK — The 7,000-pound bronze bull that symbolizes the vitality of capitalism is for sale for a minimum of \$5 million, but the buyer will have to keep it just where it is — in a city park near the New York Stock

Exchange.

"I put the bull up for sale because I need the money to create more masterpieces for New York," said 63-year-old Arturo Di Modica, who created the sculpture 15 years ago and almost instantly unloaded it on Wall Street.

Di Modica insisted any deal require the buyer to donate the landmark sculpture to the city.

Di Modica was inspired to create the 16-foot-long bull as a symbol of strength and hope after the 1987 stock market collapse. It took him two years to complete and cost him more than \$350,000.

Innocent man freed

TX EL PASO — A man who served nearly 17 years for rape was freed from prison Tuesday after DNA tests determined that he was not responsible for the crime.

Brandon Moon, 43, joined his parents, Frank and Shirley Moon, late Tuesday afternoon for a long drive to their home in Kansas City, Mo., following his release from the El Paso County jail.

Asked what he was feeling in his first moments as a free man, Moon told The Associated Press, "Numb. Have you ever had Novacaine? It's a lot like that, just from head to toe."

Moon, a former University of Texas at El Paso student, had been serving a 75-year sentence after his 1988 conviction on three counts of sexual assault.

Throughout his years behind bars, he maintained his innocence and said he never lost faith when others wouldn't listen to him.

"They're listening now," he said.

Moon said he doesn't know what the future holds for him.

"At least in part I'll continue making belt buckles, which has kind of kept me going over the years," he said, referring to his silversmith work while in prison. "What I'll be doing other than that, I don't know."

Confederate flag dress

KY LEXINGTON — Jacquelyn Dix Duty's prom dress created a stir even before she showed up for the May 1 event.

When Duty came to the Russell High School prom in a self-designed red, white and blue gown with the Confederate battle flag as part of the design, she was told to leave.

School leaders, who had heard about Duty's plans to wear the Confederate-inspired sequined gown, wouldn't allow her to enter the prom or even leave her vehicle, her lawyers say.

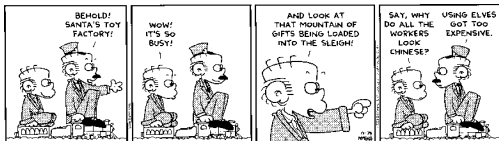
Now Duty is suing the school district in U.S. District Court in Lexington, saying the school district and administrators violated her First Amendment right to free speech and her right to celebrate her heritage. She also is suing for defamation, false imprisonment and assault.

She plans as well to sue for actual and punitive damages in excess of \$50,000.

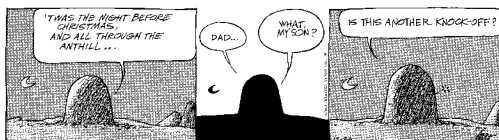
Her lawyer said Duty lost many scholarships because she was portrayed as a racist after the incident. Duty's mother added that her daughter graduated near the top of her class in May.

From wire reports

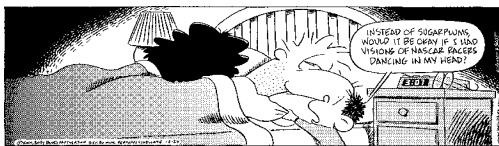
Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



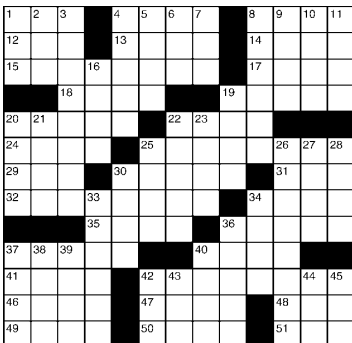
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Brewery product
- 4 History chapters
- 8 Nightfall
- 12 Zodiac critter
- 13 Comedian Chris
- 14 "— Brockovich"
- 15 Anti-Red witchhunter
- 17 Day-shift start
- 18 Hollywood clasher
- 19 Elbow
- 20 Slander
- 22 Garden starter
- 24 Hideaway
- 25 Kenobi portrayer
- 29 Grecian vessel
- 30 "... against a — troubles"
- 31 Sapporo sash
- 32 Nixon opponent
- 34 Prouberance
- 35 Lap dog, for short
- 36 Disconcerts
- 37 Cheaper group?
- 40 Antitoxins
- 41 Square
- 42 "Full dinner pail" president
- 46 Old man of Paris?
- 47 Destruction
- 48 Seine summer
- 49 Cattle herder's device
- 50 Put in the mail
- 51 Adage

Down

- 1 Branch
- 2 Fond du —, Wisconsin
- 3 Host's job
- 4 Gilch
- 5 Decomposes
- 6 Essen expletive
- 7 Firmament
- 8 Strip
- 9 Saharan
- 10 Pugilist's venue
- 11 Dangling site
- 16 Emulsifying agent
- 17 Soft ball
- 20 Run-down
- 21 part of town
- 21 Playwright
- 22 Connelly
- 22 Frighten
- 23 "Ghostbusters" role
- 25 Earth's inheritors?
- 26 Ashcroft's intended successor
- 27 Reed instrument
- 28 BBQ entree
- 30 Cinematographer
- 31 Nykist
- 33 Began
- 34 "Family Feud" host
- 36 Mock attack
- 37 "Edward Scissorhands" star
- 38 Finished
- 39 Nil
- 40 Epidemics
- 42 "— Miniver"
- 43 Prompt
- 44 JFK info
- 45 Evergreen variety

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-24

CRYPTOQUIP

X GFC'L EFK LSK
 JXIXKJR JKZXF, RELSFTZS
 X ZTKBB X'G ZF LSKJK

RB R ERBL JKBFLJ
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF TINY PARASITES
 GET INTO MAILED ITEMS, SHOULD YOU PAY
 MORE FOR SHIPPING FLEAS?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals T

Horoscope

Mars transits into Sagittarius, bringing a feeling of global unity — well, maybe unity is a stretch. Perhaps we can only hope for awareness or even acknowledgment of our foreign sisters and brothers, but generous intentions are certainly in place. The realization is that we're not so different after all. It's a perfect transit for festive interaction.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (December 25). There's simply no room for doubt this year in your personal life. Your sensational can-do attitude attracts only the most positive people to your team. A key financial move in the next six weeks sets off a series of events. An idea that's been researched, market tested and refined over a dozen times hits pay dirt in June.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You have a rare case of nerves when you wake up this morning and may feel you've returned to child-hood emotions connected with this day. Feel assured you'll rise to the occasion and deliver whatever is asked of you.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Your earth-sign super-stability is a comfort to everyone around you. You'll be the glue that keeps your group together. Music is the key to creating holiday memories. Tonight features some kind of hootenanny.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Any departure from the normal holiday rituals will bring luck and opportunity in the year ahead. So feel free to make this special day all your own. When you feel fabulously creative and unrestricted, there's more to share.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You use your psychic sense to deliver gifts that go straight to the heart. Sweethearts need relaxed one-on-one time. If you have to sneak away from family in order to get this, go for it, and don't feel guilty.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You've wisely figured out that holiday pro-

ceedings go better when you don't try to control them. This goes double for activities involving willful children or adults who ask like them. Kisses under the mistletoe are featured.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Though you have some trepidation, there's nothing to worry about. Your sincere efforts to honor the special relationships in your life bring joy. An exceptional match of style and practicality puts a shine on all you do.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You love a happy homecoming and will do everything in your power to make sure that relatives are on their best behavior. Along those lines, you're an expert at switching the conversation topic when necessary.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You know how to create multilevel fun. Someone is intent on winning your heart with an expensive gift. Only you can manage to keep commitments loose on a structured day. Hot invitations are last minute.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). When you take a detached look, there's something almost humorous about the motley assemblage of merry well-wishers around you. The more eclectic your support group is, the more thoroughly you feel supported.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). It's the lights, the music or the general sentimentality of the season? For whatever reason, you see the world through idealistic eyes — and why not for one day of the year? Love is all around you.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You've got that overriding feeling that we're all in this together. Material gifts are the least valuable ones you'll exchange this year. Your sharing extends to stories, insights and loving acknowledgments.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Go slow, and savor togetherness. Rituals you attach to this day have more meaning than gifts exchanged. Lasting bonds are formed over shared activities. Let everyone contribute to the fun, and take plenty of pictures.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red Rover



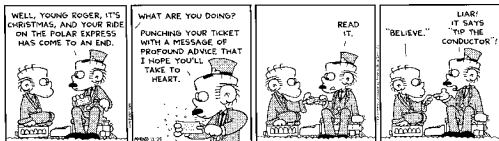
Better or Worse



Peanuts



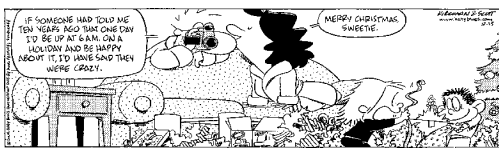
Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



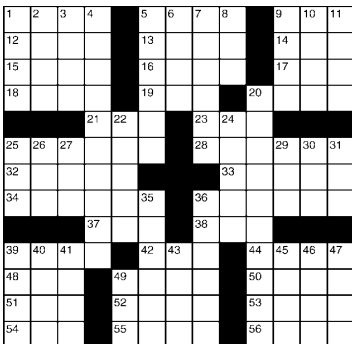
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Java Sea locale
- 5 Catcher's aid
- 9 Satchel
- 12 Hebrew month
- 13 "The Music Man" site
- 14 Flightless bird
- 15 Roman historian
- 16 Put an end to
- 17 Healers' org.
- 18 Dnieper city
- 19 Bill
- 20 Ball in a gym?
- 21 Do surveillance on
- 23 "... little teapot, ..."
- 25 Suitable
- 26 Scorching
- 32 Showed again
- 33 String quartet member
- 34 Puts forth
- 36 On the slate
- 37 Under the weather
- 38 Nevertheless
- 39 Asset
- 42 Richards or Reinking
- 44 Writer Ferber
- 48 Edge
- 49 Show off the muscles

Down

- 1 "Loser" singer
- 2 Jai follower
- 3 Troubadour's prop
- 4 Cole Porter song
- 5 Greenhouse gadget
- 6 Small bit
- 7 Trivial
- 8 Spigot
- 9 Tolerate
- 10 Bullets
- 11 Agana's island
- 20 1984 Sam Shepard
- 22 Screenplay
- 23 Streisand title role
- 24 Flick
- 25 Singer Tori
- 26 Harrison or Reed
- 27 Raw rock
- 29 "Poppycock!"
- 30 -- de-France
- 31 Mid-June honoree
- 35 Zigzag through gates
- 36 Bobcats
- 39 Ask for a really big favor?
- 41 Mid-June honoree
- 43 Caligula's nephew
- 45 Get rid of
- 46 "Peter Pan" pooch
- 47 Favorable votes
- 49 Peninsula SL

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-25

CRYPTOQUIP

H Y I I S G O H P H U V D J F H V
Q V J F F D T I U B N , X J H ' O
S P Q U U H U V D J O Q Y I Q

P Q X D - F H D B N I G G J T D .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I DON'T LOVE THE RIVIERA REGION, ALTHOUGH I GUESS I'D GO THERE AS A LAST RESORT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals N

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Image: Youth, wealth blamed for troubles

IMAGE, FROM BACK PAGE

Many of the youngsters coming into the league lack fundamentals, making their first few years on-the-job training program. Some never learned the life lessons necessary for the adult world, either, put on pedestals at increasingly young ages.

Couple that takes the huge salaries players get these days and there can be problems. Teenagers who had to ask their parents for spending money only a year or two ago are suddenly millionaires carrying \$100 bills for pocket change. Tricked-out SUVs are a given, and some players sport more bling than Jennifer Lopez.

"I really do think that the perception from the fans is that players are selfish, that the only thing that matters is the money — because the money has gotten so big — and the players don't really respect or care about the fans," said Chicago Bulls general manager John Paxson, who won three NBA titles as a player.

"I don't think that's necessarily the reality, but as they say, perception is reality."

The personal antics don't help. Kids want no longer face criminal charges, but he's still being sued by a woman who claims he raped her. Police had to use a stun gun on Michael Olowokandi last night to get him to leave an Indianapolis bar.

Carmelo Anthony has been in a bar fight, charged briefly with drug possession after a friend's marijuana was found in his backpack and seen on a homemade DVD with a man who warns that people who tip police about drug deals "get a hole in their neck" — and that's just since September.

Latrell Sprewell said "I've got my family to feed" when he demanded the Minnesota Timberwolves extend the contract that pays him \$14.6 million this year, then got suspended for yelling a sexual vulgarity at a female fan. A week after signing a six-year, \$84 million contract extension with Portland, Zach Randolph had to find his own way to a game in Toronto because his alarm clock didn't go off and he missed the team flight.

And, of course, there's the brawl. Ron Artest, last year's defensive player of the year, has been suspended for the rest of the season after charging into the stands in Detroit and punching fan he thought had thrown a drink at him, and eight other players got suspensions ranging from eight to 30 games. Five Indiana Pacers are facing charges, and the civil lawsuits are already starting.

"Any professional sport has a problem to some degree when an incident like this takes place," San Antonio Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "The salaries that professional athletes make can be a problem if players aren't aware of what that responsibility might be, what comes along with that contract. Some players understand it, some teams understand it, some don't."

"But to make a broad stroke, 'The NBA or this sport or those players have a problem,' I think is dangerous."

Even if fans are grumbling, they haven't turned their backs on the NBA. Ratings for Game 5 of the NBA Finals was the second-highest since 1998, and the entire series drew its highest ratings in three years.

According to Forbes magazine's annual valuation of the league, the average franchise is now worth \$302 million, a 14 percent increase from the previous year. Forbes also said the NBA made an average of \$4.4 million on licensing in 2003, up 20 percent.

"There probably are still some people holding out, saying, 'Remember sports — when people played for the glory of sport alone.'"

But most people are sophisticated enough to understand why it's the business that it is," said Ken Shropshire, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School who specializes in sports business.

There is still plenty about the league that's good, too. No other pro sport is as accessible, with fans seated right at courtside and no hats or helmets to obscure players' faces. LeBron James has



A week after signing a six-year, \$84 million extension with Portland, Zach Randolph had to pay his own way to Toronto after missing a team flight when he overslept.

more than lived up to his considerable hype — on and off the court.

And on the same day the Pistons and Pacers were fighting with fans, New Jersey's Richard Jefferson offered to replace a 5-year-old girl's wheelchair after he learned it had been destroyed during a school field trip.

"You just can't condemn the other guys. You can't say, 'Hey, you knucklehead. I don't want to deal with you,'" Davis said. "You have to pull them aside and say, 'There were guys before you who worked real hard so you can be in the position you're in today. Don't let them down by making bad decisions, whether it's on the court or off the court.'"

But one of those guys who paved the way for the NBA's phenomenal success in the last two decades has no doubt the kids will be all right.

It's not easy making the jump from high school to the pros, either on the court or off, Pacers president Larry Bird said. Give the young players some time, and they'll figure it out, Bird said.

"I've got a good feeling that the league, in a couple of years, is going to be a lot better than it is today," he said. "Some of the young players, they're only going to get better. They're great players now, but they'll figure it out and get better."

Expect nothing but mismatch from Kobe, Shaq

The Shaq-Kobe split is a good example of why no-fault divorces caught on so quickly.

They were never going to stay together, no matter how good the winning was. At some point, that mattered less than who got the credit. Now they're free to bicker for the rest of their competitive lifetimes about who gets the blame.

On Saturday, the rest of us start keeping score.

From a promotional angle, at least, this is already a mismatch.

And as the latest game of the century approaches, it's worth remembering that maybe only Don King and Terrell Owens are better self-promoters than Shaquille O'Neal. As a carnival barker, the big man is a genius. Selling war tickets is practically his stock-in-trade.

Asked whether he expected Bryant to challenge him by driving the lane, Shaq's first response was, "No. Not at all. It's not something that I have time to think about, because I'm not that type of player."

But given a moment to think about it, he couldn't resist adding: "But of course, when you've got a Corvette that runs into a brick wall, you know what's going to happen."

O'Neal was smiling slyly when he said it, but that little cautionary tale works at several levels. First, it puts Bryant on notice that business is just that — business — and that anyone else who tried to drive the lane would get the same.

Not surprising, it also fixes the differences between the two in terms most favorable to Shaq. It says one of them is fast and flashy — that would be the same guy O'Neal nicknamed "Showboat" not long after they started playing together — and the other is solid; that is one high-maintenance and the other decidedly low-tech.

For those fans who still haven't chosen sides since the breakup, it's an invitation to do just that. And why not? As he reminded the nation during the interview that ran at halftime of "Monday Night Football," O'Neal has the upper hand on the court at the moment, too.

"I got somebody, that other guy, who's just as lethal," Shaq said, talking about Miami teammate and budding superstar Dwyane Wade. "He's a little bit younger, he's got a lot of tools and a lot to do, but he's just as lethal. It's my job to make him lethal-er. It's my job to make him the lethal-est



Jim Litke

From a promotional angle, at least, this is already a mismatch. And as the latest game of the century approaches, it's worth remembering that maybe only Don King and Terrell Owens are better self-promoters than Shaquille O'Neal. As a carnival barker, the big man is a genius. Selling war tickets is practically his stock-in-trade.

The Lakers, meanwhile, are 13-11 and still smarting over consecutive losses in Washington, for the first time in a dozen years, and Memphis, which hadn't won in 18 tries in Los Angeles, dating to when the franchise began play in Vancouver in 1995.

Their shortcomings are evident, but not in the glaring way that the weakness in the middle. Bryant still thinks he can play — or, worse yet, talk — his way out of any jam, and so he tries to paper over the holes by playing at a triple-double pace every night. All he's proved is that five guys will almost always beat one. That was Phil Jackson's mantra, too, and when Bryant finally tired of hearing it, he simply ran off the coach.

Just before O'Neal met the same fate, he warned Lakers owner Jerry Buss that hanging on to Bryant at all costs would come back to haunt the franchise.

"They say I'm getting older. Of course, I am. But can't nobody mess with me," he said. "I'm like toilet paper. Pampers and toilet paper. I'm definitely proven to be effective."

O'Neal made his case once he and Bryant were separated, and now comes his first chance to make it when they share a court.

Everything about their relationship will be different, but in one important sense, nothing has changed.

"Kobe's got all-world talent," O'Neal said a few years back, when it still seemed possible they might iron out their differences. "But you have to learn to play with other people who can score."

Jim Litke is a national sports columnist for The Associated Press. Write to him at: jlitke@ap.org

Pistons' Brown fined for arguing with referee

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Detroit Pistons coach Larry Brown was fined \$15,000 by the NBA on Thursday for verbal abuse of an official, a day after he had to be restrained during a postgame argument with referee Anthony Jordan.

Brown's confrontation with Jordan occurred following the Pistons' 89-82 loss to the Bulls in Detroit on Wednesday night.

"The guy wouldn't talk to me during the game, and I can't understand that — I wasn't being discourteous," Brown said after the game. "Well, maybe I was at the end, and I suppose I'll hear about that."

Raptors' Rose demoted from starting lineup

TORONTO — Jalen Rose has been dropped from the Toronto Raptors' starting lineup, and he's not happy about it.

"I feel like I've been shown the door," said Rose, who was told about the move during a meeting with general manager Bob Babcock and coach Sam Mitchell before Wednesday's 98-86 victory over Utah. "I'm just waiting to see what happens."

Eric Williams replaced Rose as the starting small forward. The move came five days after Toronto traded Vince Carter to New Jersey for Williams, Aaron Williams, Alonzo Mourning and two first-round draft picks.

"This isn't the first time in my career where I was in a situation where I was treated unfairly," Rose said. "I've seen this movie before."

Rose has struggled since his name came up in the trade talks a month ago. He said he saw what was just a throw-in in a possible trade of Carter.

He has three years and \$48 million left on his contract.

The 10-year veteran has looked disinterested while scoring just four points in two recent games. He entered the game averaging 14.8 points and 3.3 rebounds.

NBA
briefs

Illini gets to brag, but it's no cakewalk

The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Illinois had nothing but easy victories so far this season. The top-ranked Illini even cruised over the likes of Wake Forest and Gonzaga.

For the first time this season, Illinois was pushed to the final minute and it was still a victory, 70-64 over Missouri on Wednesday night.

"I'd love to win every game by 20, but that's hard," guard Deron Williams said, shorting his team two points off its average margin of victory. "We needed to win a game like this."

Luther Head scored 20 points and Williams had nine of his 19 over the final 3:19 to help the Illini (11-0) overcome foul problems, poor shooting and a second-half surge by the Tigers (6-5).

Roger Powell Jr. had 14 points for Illinois, which matched its season-worst shooting percentage (42.3) but still won its fifth straight over Missouri.

Illinois entered the game leading the country in shooting at 53 percent and the closest any opponent had come was Arkansas, which lost by 12 points. Those were things Illini coach Bruce Weber didn't think would matter in the "Braggin' Rights" game.

"It's too big of a game, and you add the extra incentive of us being No. 1," Weber said. "They raised their level, they battled, they fought."

Linas Kleiza had 25 points, one off his career best, for Missouri. He was 11-for-13 from the free-throw line and had seven rebounds and three assists. He also helped put Illinois' frontcourt in foul trouble by bullying inside for shots.

"Linas was in an attack mode," Missouri guard Jimmy McKinney said. "His mind was set. I told him they couldn't guard him. They couldn't do nothing but foul him."

The Tigers, down 15 points at halftime, cut it to five with just under eight minutes left and to four on Jason Horton's three-pointer with 14 seconds to go.

Williams was 11-for-12 at the free-throw line

down the stretch, including two by Williams with 10 seconds left for a 70-64 lead.

No. 7 Syracuse 88, Rice 72: At Syracuse, N.Y., Gary McKnight had 25 points, 10 assists and a career-high nine rebounds and Josh Pace equaled his career high with 22 points for the Orange (11-1).

Michael Harris had 25 points and eight rebounds for the Owls (5-3), who lost at No. 11 Connecticut on Sunday.

No. 8 Kentucky 92, William & Mary 47: At Lexington, Ky., Chuck Hayes scored 18 points and Keleena Azubuike added 17 for the Wildcats (8-1), who won their fourth straight.

Reid Markham and Taylor Mokris each had seven points for the visiting Tribe, who shot 37.2 percent and finished with a season-high 32 turnovers.

No. 9 Georgia Tech 90, Charleston Southern 48: At Atlanta, Isma'il Muhammad scored 16 points and Luke Schenschel added 14 as the Yellow Jackets (8-1) bounced back from their first loss of the season.

Kurtis Rice had 12 points for the Buccaneers (1-6).

No. 11 Connecticut 87, Cent. Connecticut 59: At Hartford, Conn., Marcus Williams had school-record 16 assists and Josh Boone and Charlie Villanueva each scored 20 points for the Huskies (6-1).

DeMarion Anderson had 23 points for the Blue Devils (2-5).

No. 12 Washington 114, Sacred Heart 53: At Seattle, Jamia Williams scored 22 points to lead a school-record eight players in double figures for the Huskies (9-1), who won their fifth straight.

Freshman Luke Granato had 15 points — all on three-pointers — for the Pioneers (1-7), who dropped their sixth straight.

No. 15 Texas 97, Centenary 52: At Austin, Texas, Kenny Taylor scored 25 points and the Longhorns (20-2) dominated with defense in the opener of a five-game holiday homestand.

Kevin Taylor had 14 points for the Gents (2-7), who trailed 42-12 at halftime.

No. 18 Louisville 77, Austin Peay 49: Taquan Dean scored 16 points and Ellis Myles had 12 points and 12 rebounds for the



Missouri's Marshall Brown has his shot blocked by Illinois' Brian Randle during the first half Wednesday night. Illinoi won 70-64.

Cardinals (8-2) in the championship game of their Billy Minardi Classic.

Dean, who had 20 points in the opening-round victory over IUPUI, was selected the tournament's outstanding player.

Maurice Hampton and William Durden each scored eight points for the Governors (2-7).

No. 19 Alabama 76, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi 54: At Tuscaloosa, Ala., Kennedy Winston had 24 points and 12 rebounds for Alabama (10-1), which closed the game with a 24-4 run. Aaron White led the Islanders (7-2) with 13 points.

No. 21 Mississippi St. 95, Jacksonville St. 53: At Jackson, Miss., Lawrence Roberts had 22 points and 20 rebounds for the Bulldogs (11-2). Brandon Roberts had 15 points for the Gamecocks (4-7).

No. 22 Cincinnati 84, La Salle 63: At Cincinnati, James White and Eric Hicks each had 15 points for the Bearcats (9-0), who played in front of a home crowd held to about 2,000 by a snowstorm. Steven Smith had 35 points for the Explorers (1-7).

Jayhawks struggle as Simien is missed

By STEVE BREISNDEN

The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — A nine-day Christmas break will give Kansas some much-needed rest. It won't bring back the Jayhawks' star power forward, though.

Second-ranked Kansas will have to play two key nonconference games and a chunk of its Big 12 Conference season without Wayne Simien, beginning on New Year's Day when Georgia Tech visits Allen Fieldhouse.

"It's always going to be in the back of our minds," freshman guard Russell Robinson said after Kansas beat Wisconsin-Milwaukee 73-62 Wednesday night in its first game since Simien had surgery on his left thumb. "We still need to play with confidence, even without Wayne."

Simien, injured Saturday in a 64-0 victory over South Carolina, is expected to be out 4-6 weeks. His absence was obvious in the Jayhawks' first game without him, as his replacement — freshman Darnell Jackson — got in foul trouble early and didn't score or get a rebound.

"I don't think it went great, but I don't think it went terrible either," coach Bill Self said.

Three bright spots for the Jayhawks (8-0), whose game against Georgia Tech will be followed in short order by the conference opener and a trip to Kentucky.

Much of the slack was taken up by two of Simien's senior classmates.

Keith Langford scored 21 points and Aaron Miles had nine assists to become the Big 12's career leader in that category.

Still, Langford said, "I feel good because we won — but if we continue to play that way, we will lose Jan. 1."

Miles has 800 assists; Oklahoma State's Doug Gottlieb had 793 from 1998 to 2000.

Miles, who also had eight rebounds in a five-shy 67-66 victory against Georgia Tech, said Self.

Freshman Alex Galindo had a solid game at forward, finishing with 17 points and 11 rebounds.

"I feel good in my new role," said Galindo, who played a season-high 17 minutes. "I will need to work on playing against bigger and stronger guys. It's going to be hard work from now on, but I like it."

Wisconsin-Milwaukee (6-3), the preseason pick to win the Horizon League, lost its third straight despite six three-pointers and a career-high 26 points from Ed McCants.

The Panthers got to 66-59 on Adrian Tigrert's basket with 3:11 to go but fell 66-69 when Tigrert hit a three-pointer with 1:12 to go to cut the lead to 69-62.

Wakes emerges from 'The Pit' with a win

By PETER HERRERA

The Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Wake Forest coach Skip Prosser has been critical of the Demon Deacons at times this season, saying they didn't play to their potential and let teams with considerably less talent stay in games.

There were no such complaints from Prosser on Wednesday night. No. 5 Wake Forest displayed poise and scoring punch in an 81-64 victory over New Mexico before a raucous sellout crowd of 18,018 in The Pit.

Led by its backcourt trio of Chris Paul, Justin Gray and Aaron Downey, some tenacious rebounding and a defense that harassed New Mexico into its worst shooting night of the season, Wake Forest (10-1) pulled away in the second half.

There were no signs this time of the team that struggled to put away Elmer seven days earlier or the one that survived a scare at Temple on Dec. 13 before pulling out a 67-64 victory.

"We guarded very, very well," Prosser said. "This is a team that's averaging in the mid-80s and to hold them to 33 percent and 19 percent from the three, and to beat them by 13 on the glass, is the reflection of a good effort by our kids."

Paul scored 15 of his 23 points in the second half and Gray scored 17, 11 coming over a 4½-minute stretch after he shook off a hard foul and returned to the court with the Demon Deacons leading 48-45.

"I got me going a little bit," Gray said of the hit he took. "There was a lot of pushing around, so when I got bumped up a little bit, it told me to take my game to another level and to play with higher intensity."

Danny Granger had 24 points and nine rebounds for the Lobos (10-2).

Gray and Paul, who combined for nine of Wake Forest's 10 three-pointers, carried the offense every time New Mexico made a run in the second half. Downey finished with 16 points,

doing most of his damage with 12 in the first half. "We talked to our three guards and said this game should never get away from us," Prosser said. "They made a couple of runs and the place was ready to get loud, but I credit the poise of my players."

New Mexico twice got within a point early in the second half, but aside from Granger had trouble scoring in the second half. A 29-91-pound Wake Forest center, Eric Williams sat out the final 17 minutes with four fouls.

"I actually think it helped them because when Williams is in the game, their whole focus is to get the ball inside," New Mexico coach Ritchie McKay said. "With one less scorer out there, Paul and Gray had a green light."

Williams scored just six points, the first time this season he failed to reach double figures.

While Williams was in, he and Gray had a green light. On the other side as Wake Forest outrebounded the Lobos 47-34, Levy had 10 rebounds and Williams eight.

New Mexico took its last lead at 22-21 with 6:51 left in the first half on a layup by Alfred Neale. Wake Forest went ahead to stay on a three-pointer by Paul and a jumper by Downey.

A three-point play by Granger got New Mexico to 48-45 with 13:12 left. It was at that point that Gray took over, hitting three three-pointers and a short jumper. His fourth and last three-point put Wake Forest ahead 61-51.

"Coach put me in a situation with the ball in my hands and told me to make plays," Gray said. "When you're in a venue like this, you either create something for yourself or you create something for others. And tonight, I was making some shots."

New Mexico, which earlier this season set a school record with 20 three-pointers against Santa Clara, missed 21 of 25 from beyond the arc. The Lobos had a season-low nine assists.

"You can look at one stat and see what happened," McKay said. "We assisted the ball only three times in the second half. We weren't patient."

BCS planning new formula without AP poll

BY RALPH D. RUSSO
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Bowl Championship Series is ready to move on without The Associated Press college football poll. "I wasn't surprised by the AP's decision," Big East commissioner Mike Tranghese said. "I don't think it's a negative issue. We're just going to have to put our heads together and come up with an alternative way of picking the teams for the 1-2 game."

The Associated Press told the BCS on Tuesday to stop using its poll to determine which teams play for a national title.

BCS coordinator and Big 12 commissioner Kevin Weiberg has said the BCS hopes to have a new formula ready by April.

"We're not heading toward a playoff," Tranghese said Wednesday.

So for the second straight season and the fifth time since the system was implemented in 1998, the BCS will change the way it computes its standings.

This season, the BCS streamlined its formula and put heavy emphasis on the AP and ESPN/USA Today coaches poll. The goal was to make it more likely that Nos. 1

More changes brewing for troubled system

and 2 in the polls played in the national title game, unlike last season when Southern California was a consensus No. 1 but left out of the BCS championship.

Without the AP poll, the BCS's current formula is left with the coaches poll and six computer rankings.

The BCS could just stick with those two and change the weighting system. Or it could add more computers. Or maybe it could even revise the strength of schedule component, which was eliminated because it was deemed redundant.

"We certainly have other options on how to select and rank the teams," Pac-10 commissioner Tom Hansen said.

The BCS already was looking at the possibility of a selection committee picking the teams for the championship game, taking a page from the NCAA basketball tournaments.

But a committee probably wouldn't be the best way to fill the two at-large spots.

And starting with the 2006 season, the number of at-large teams is destined to go

up as the BCS expands to five games to allow greater access to teams from outside the six conferences that now have automatic entry.

"Adding the fifth game is going to give us less pressure," Hansen said. "One of the problems has been good teams being left out. With one more game, that's less likely to happen."

The original BCS formula was comprised of an average of the two human polls, an average of three computer rankings, total losses and strength of schedule.

Since then the computers rankings have changed in number and name and other elements have come and gone. The polls have been a constant.

The coaches poll is not likely to follow the AP's path.

"We'll be a part of it if we are asked to be a part of it," said Grant Teaff, the president of the American Football Coaches Association, which oversees the poll.

The AP said in a statement that the BCS's unauthorized use of its poll has

"harmed AP's reputation and interfered with AP's agreements with AP poll voters."

So losing the AP poll doesn't spell doom for the BCS and is not a step toward creating the playoff system the fans and a growing number of coaches want.

The university presidents have made it clear they won't sign off on a playoff system.

ABC, unhappy with the BCS's idea of adding another game with no championship ramifications, tried to push the BCS toward a playoff during contract negotiations for broadcast rights earlier this year. But the BCS simply found another suitor, happy to buy what it was selling.

The BCS signed a four-year deal worth \$320 million with Fox last month for the broadcast rights to the Fiesta, Orange and Sugar bowls from 2007-10 and the national title game from 2007-09.

"The BCS is here and it's going to continue," Tranghese said. "But the BCS is a target for the playoff proposal. When something like this happens they jump on it. They look at something like this as a crack. They don't understand the strong position of our presidents."

Bowling Green pulls away from Memphis

BY JOHN ZENOR
The Associated Press

MOBILE, Ala. — Omar Jacobs and P.J. Pope helped Bowling Green turn a shootout into a blowout in the GMAC Bowl.

Jacobs passed for 365 yards and five touchdowns — four in the first half — and Pope ran 28 times for 151 yards and a pair of 1-yard scores in the Falcons' 52-35 victory over Memphis on Wednesday night.

Pope also caught a 13-yard pass for the only score of the third quarter to give the Falcons (9-3) a 42-28 lead.

"He might be our best offensive player overall," coach Gregg Brandon said.

And that's saying something. Jacobs, who capped a marvelous debut season as a starter, connected with Charles Shanon and Steve Sanders for two touchdown passes each before halftime.

The Falcons led 35-28 at halftime and won their fourth consecutive bowl game.

"We've been putting up big numbers in the first half but we don't necessarily do it in the second half," said Pope. Who has scored in nine straight games. "We were talking about finishing all week."

The Tigers (8-4), playing in back-to-back bowl games for the first time, couldn't keep up with the nation's No. 4 offense, which totaled 558 total yards.

Memphis' DeAngelo Williams



Bowling Green running back P.J. Pope, left, runs past the Memphis defense during the first quarter in the GMAC Bowl on Wednesday.

ran for 120 yards on 18 carries before limping to the locker room at the end of the third quarter with a broken right leg.

He hurt it earlier in the game but went back in and couldn't get through a tearful postgame press conference.

"He had been their weapon all year, and with him being hurt and

out of the game we knew they're just a one-dimensional team," Bowling Green linebacker Jason Burks said.

Danny Wimprine nearly matched Jacobs' performance, going 26-for-39 for 324 yards and four touchdowns. But Wimprine passed for just 11 yards in the third quarter and lost a fumble. Jacobs, who led the nation and set a Mid-American Conference record with 41 TD passes, completed 26 of 44 passes with an interception to earn Most Valuable Player honors.

If his first season as a starter is an indication, he's in line for the kind of prolific career of former MAC quarterback backs such as Byron Leftwich and Ben Roethlisberger.

"We saw glimpses of it in the few games he played in last year," Bowling Green offensive lineman Andrew Hart said. "We knew he had a chance to be pretty good. We didn't know how good."

Jacobs set the MAC record with his 41st overall touchdown rushing or passing in the first quarter, adding four more. He also joined Roethlisberger and Leftwich as the league's only 4,000-yard passers.

Pitt hires Wannstedt

BY ALAN ROBINSON
The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Former Miami Dolphins coach Dave Wannstedt accepted the coaching job at his alma mater, Pittsburgh, on Thursday, exactly a week after he turned the Panthers down and said he wasn't ready to coach again.

Wannstedt, who stepped aside as the Dolphins' coach by mutual agreement when the team was 1-8 this season, felt differently after talking to Pitt athletic director Jeff Long early this week. Wannstedt agreed to take the job after Long agreed to bump up the salaries for Pitt's assistants.

After Wannstedt pulled out, Long interviewed Baltimore Ravens offensive coordinator Matt Cavanaugh and Pitt defensive coordinator Paul Rhoads twice each, but Wannstedt was believed to be Pitt's first choice all along. Wannstedt was known to have the backing of Pitt chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg.

Wannstedt, a native of Baldwin, Pa., a Pittsburgh suburb, has never been a college head coach, but is a former Pitt assistant and is known to be an innovative defensive coach. He succeeds Walt Harris, who is leaving for Stanford after coaching Pitt to a 25-11 record the past three seasons — Pitt's best three-year mark since Jackie Sherrill went 33-3 from 1979-81.

Pitt interviewed Oklahoma co-defensive coordinator Bo Pelini, but it never really strayed beyond Pitt grads or former coaches associated with the school. New York Giants defensive coordinator Tim Lewis, a former Pitt and Pittsburgh Steelers assistant, and former Pitt player and assistant Sal Sunseri of the Carolina Panthers also talked with Long.

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Dodgers, Drew OK five-year contract

BY RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — J.D. Drew is set to join the Los Angeles Dodgers, while Arizona plans to put aside Randy Johnson trade talks until after Christmas.

Drew and the Dodgers have reached a preliminary agreement on a \$55 million, five-year contract that probably will be finalized Thursday.

Drew's contract, first reported Wednesday by The Record of Hackensack, N.J., was contingent on him passing a physical exam.

He will receive a \$2 million signing bonus and a \$9 million salary next season, then earn \$11 million annually in the final four years.

A day after meeting with New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner in Tampa, Fla., center fielder Carlos Beltran got together Wednesday in Kissimmee, Fla., with the Houston Astros, the team he helped get within one victory of the World Series.

As teams and agents worked to get deals in place before the holidays, pitcher Orlando Hernandez agreed Wednesday to an \$8 million, two-year contract with the Chicago White Sox.

In two other preliminary agreements, outfielder Moises Alou got a two-year deal with San Francisco worth about \$13.25 million and right-hander Wade Miller, cut by Houston on Monday, received a \$1.5 million, one-year contract from the Boston Red Sox.

The Yankees, who want to add Johnson to their All-Star-filled clubhouse, meanwhile finalized their \$39.95 million, four-year contract with right-hander Carl Pavano. The World Series champion Red Sox completed their \$25.5 million, three-year deal with right-hander Matt Clement.

Florida, which had wanted to re-sign Tim Lincecum, reached a preliminary agreement on a \$750,000, one-year contract with right-hander reliever John Reiding, who was let go by Cincinnati on Monday.

In other free-agent news:

■ St. Louis added left-hander Mike Myers (\$600,000) and kept outfielder So Taguchi (\$550,000).

■ San Diego got outfielder Mark Sweeney (\$575,000).

■ Cleveland agreed to minor league deals with right-hander Jason Bere and left-hander Billy Taylor.

■ Tampa Bay settle on a one-year contract with former Cleveland first baseman/designated hitter Josh Phelps.



J.D. Drew

Two players eligible for salary arbitration agreed to one-year contracts: Expos catcher Brian Schneider (\$2 million) and San Diego outfielder Dave Roberts (\$1.35 million), who was acquired from Boston this week.

Arizona, whose trade with the Dodgers and Yankees came apart Tuesday, said it isn't looking for a new partner to create a three-team deal that would send Johnson to the Yankees. Managing partner Ken Kendrick said the Diamondbacks may keep the Big Unit for 2005.

"We're all in a holiday mode starting today, basically," Kendrick said. "You never know what to expect in the baseball world, but I think right now our focus is to get to our families and let everybody have a little down time."

The Yankees were livid over the Dodgers' decision to scuttle the deal, insisting that Los Angeles had said late Monday and early Tuesday it was going ahead with the trade, which would have sent pitcher Javier Vazquez from New York to the Dodgers and outfielder Shawn Green from Los Angeles to the Diamondbacks.

"After everything seemed to be agreed upon by midnight Monday, the only way it could work is if you have physicals taken by a certain time Wednesday," Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said. "And that was not feasible — the time of year we're at, Christmas week, people out of the country."

Beltran and his agent, Scott Boras, spoke with Astros owner Drayton McLane, team president Tal Smith and general manager Tim Lincecum at the team's spring training camp.

"This is a very good spot," Purpura said. "This is a continuation of what we all knew from the beginning was going to be a long process."

If Houston doesn't reach an agreement with Beltran by Jan. 8, the Astros would be ineligible to re-sign him until May 1. That makes the next two weeks critical.

"I think we're at a point with this negotiation where we have entertained offers from everyone," Boras said. "We're moving at a much more rapid pace."

Bertuzzi's plea of guilty draws year's probation

The Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Vancouver Canucks star Todd Bertuzzi pleaded guilty to assault, more than nine months after slugging Colorado's Steve Moore in the head from behind during a game.

Bertuzzi, who faced a maximum of 18 months in prison, was given a conditional discharge Wednesday, the sentence prosecutor Garth Loepky recommended after Bertuzzi agreed to plead guilty.

Bertuzzi received a year's probation in which he is not allowed to play in a game against Moore, who was hospitalized with three fractured vertebrae, facial cuts, post-concussion symptoms and amnesia after the March 8 hit.

Bertuzzi also must perform 80 hours of community service.

If he complies and meets probation requirements, he won't have a criminal record.

"I have concluded that the imposition of a discharge is not contrary to the public interest," Judge Herb Weitzel said.

Now Bertuzzi has to repair his reputation in hockey circles.

Bertuzzi was suspended indefinitely by the NHL, missing 13 regular-season games and seven post-season games while losing nearly \$502,000 in salary. On Friday, he was barred from playing in Europe by the International Ice Hockey Federation.

Bill Daly, the NHL's chief legal officer, said the league expects Bertuzzi to ask for a quick hearing to reinstate his playing status despite the lockout that threatens to wipe out the season. The players' association said it wouldn't stand in the way of a hearing with commissioner Gary Bettman.

Moore, who does not have an NHL contract and still has health issues from Bertuzzi's punch, was not in the courtroom, but delivered a statement that was read before the sentence was handed down.

"I have no desire to interact with him (Bertuzzi) in any way," Moore said. "If I'm ever able to play again, I would ask that Todd Bertuzzi never be permitted to play in any sporting activity I'm involved in."

Tim Dawson, Moore's Toronto-based lawyer, said a civil suit against Bertuzzi hinges on whether Moore can resume his career.

Herminter settles with German insurance firm

VIENNA, Austria — Austrian skier Hermann Maier has settled with court with a German insurance company over the 2001 road accident that nearly ended his career, his lawyer said Thursday.

Karl Heinz Klee declined to give details on the terms of the settlement between his client and the insurer of the German car



AP

Todd Bertuzzi, accompanied by his wife, Julie, arrives at Provincial Court in Vancouver, British Columbia on Wednesday. Bertuzzi pleaded guilty to assault for slugging Colorado forward Steve Moore from behind and driving his face into the ice during a game last season.

driver who was found negligent in the accident.

The crash in August 2001 between Maier's motorcycle and the car near his hometown of Flachau left the athlete on the verge of kidney failure and nearly resulted in the amputation of his right leg. Doctors inserted screws and a titanium rod into his leg, and grafted skin from his left arm onto his right shin. For several days, two tennis ball-sized blood clots also paralyzed his legs.

But he recovered, learning to walk again and then ski, despite excruciating pain.

After missing the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, he returned in the 2003 season, tied American Bode Miller for the silver medal in the super-G in the world championships and clinched the World Cup title.

Organizers negotiate transfer of funds to cover shortfall

ROME — Organizers of the Turin 2006 Winter Olympics said Thursday they are negotiating a transfer of funds from a public agency to cover a budget shortfall estimated to be over \$243 million.

Organizers said in a statement they were meeting in Rome on Thursday to finalize a transfer of funds from Sviluppo Italia, an agency linked to the Economy Ministry that promotes business development and investment.

Organizers have been looking for ways to cover the budget shortfall ahead of a vote on a provisional budget for the games.

Report: Russian swimming great Popov retires

PARIS — Four-time Olympic champion swimmer Alexander Popov of Russia has retired.

The French sports daily L'Equipe reported Thursday that Popov, 33, made the decision after consulting with his coach and family upon returning home from the Athens Olympics in August, which he left without a medal, L'Equipe reported.

A retirement ceremony is being planned in Switzerland, where Popov has resided for the past two years, L'Equipe said.

The four-time Russian Olympian won the 50-meter and 100-meter freestyle in the 1992 Barcelona Games and in Atlanta in 1996. He earned a silver in the 2000 Games in Sydney.

Pyeongchang to bid for 2014 Winter Games

SEOUL, South Korea — Pyeongchang was selected Thursday as South Korea's bidder for the 2014 Winter Olympics, winning a second chance to try for the games.

The Korean Olympic Committee called its Standing Committee on Thursday to choose between Pyeongchang and Muju as the bidder for the Winter Games, and unanimously voted for Pyeongchang, said Kim Choon-ki, a committee spokesman.

Pyeongchang, 100 miles east of Seoul, bid unsuccessfully for the 2010 Olympics, losing out to Vancouver, British Columbia.

Keystone State dominance

Nine Eagles, six Steelers are headed for Honolulu

By BARRY WILNER
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Going 13-1 hasn't just assured the Eagles and Steelers of division titles. It's also made them the leaders in Pro Bowl players.

Donovan McNabb and Terrell Owens were among nine Philadelphia players chosen for the game, the most representatives voted in for one team since 1998.

The Steelers had six Pro Bowlers in results released Wednesday.

Joining quarterback McNabb and wide receiver Owens, who had ankle surgery Wednesday and is out for the rest of the regular season and perhaps the playoffs, were tackle Tra Thomas, linebacker Jeremiah Trotter, placekicker David Akers, special teamer Ike Reese, and one of four Pro Bowl starters: cornerback Lito Sheppard and safeties Michael Lewis and Brian Dawkins.

"You just try to encourage all the guys," McNabb said. "It's good to see that Lito, Mike and I have made it and get an opportunity to get over there and get a good feel of All-Star play and to say that they've been a Pro Bowler. It says a lot for this organization, it says a lot for those players and it says a lot for this team."

"We're going to continue this thing on and continue to open up eyes."

The Eagles have clinched home-field advantage for the NFC playoffs. Pittsburgh owns the AFC North crown and had the next-most selections in balloting for players, coaches and fans. The Steelers had six linebackers Joey Porter and James Farrior, safety Troy Polamalu, center Jeff Hartings, guard Alan Faneca and wide receiver Hines Ward. That led the AFC ahead of Baltimore and



Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb was selected to play in his fifth Pro Bowl. Nine players is the most Philadelphia has ever had in a Pro Bowl and the most for an NFL team since 1998.

Kansas City with five each, while Indianapolis and New England had four apiece.

"We do have a good team and our individual success is a direct result of our team," Farrior said.

Green Bay, Atlanta and Dallas had four each in the NFC for the game in Honolulu on Feb. 13.

There were 25 first-time selections.

For only the third time, a set of brothers made the same Pro Bowl. Cornerback Ronde Barber of Tampa Bay and running back Tiki Barber of the Giants were selected for the NFC roster — the first twins to make it.

The other brothers were Bruce and Clay Matthews in 1989 and 1990, Sterling and Shannon Sharpton from 1993-95.

Peyton Manning set a record in fan voting and was a runaway

choice for AFC quarterback, along with the Patriots' Tom Brady and the Chargers' Drew Brees.

"I certainly appreciate it," said Manning, one touchdown pass short of Dan Marino's record of 48 in a season. "I know it's voted on by my peers, by the coaches and the fans, and I'm proud to represent the Colts there."

The other Colts on the AFC roster were wide receiver Marvin Harrison, running back Edgerrin James and defensive end Dwight Freeney, the league's sacks leader with 15.

On becoming first Colts defender since and John Dutton from 1975-77 to make it two straight years, Freeney said, "You want to make it a consistent thing."

Tampa Bay linebacker Derrick Brooks made it for the eighth consecutive time, joining four others — Jack Lambert, Lawrence Tay-

Pro Bowl Roster

American Football Conference

Offense

Wide receivers — Marvin Harrison, Indianapolis; Andre Johnson, Houston; Chad Johnson, Cincinnati; Hines Ward, Pittsburgh.

Tight ends — Willie Anderson, Cincinnati; Jonathan Ogden, Baltimore; Willie Roaf, Kansas City.

Guards — Alan Faneca, Pittsburgh; Will Shields, Kansas City; Brian Waters, Kansas City.

Centers — Jeff Hartings, Pittsburgh; Kevin Mawae, New York Jets.

Quarterbacks — Tom Brady, New England; Drew Brees, San Diego; Peyton Manning, Indianapolis.

Running backs — Edgerrin James, Indianapolis; Curtis Martin, New York Jets; LaDainian Tomlinson, San Diego.

Fullback — Tony Richardson, Kansas City.

Defense

Ends — Brian Abraham, New York Jets; Dwight Freeney, Indianapolis; Jason Taylor, Miami.

Outside linemen — Sam Adams, Buffalo; Richard Seymour, New England; Marcus Stroud, Jacksonville.

Outside linebackers — Joey Porter, Pittsburgh; Taseo Solles, Buffalo; Terrell Suggs, Baltimore.

Inside linebackers — James Farrior, Pittsburgh; Ray Lewis, Baltimore.

Cornerbacks — Champ Bailey, Denver; Troy James, Cincinnati; Chris McAlister, Baltimore.

Strong safety — Troy Polamalu, Pittsburgh; Ed Reed, Baltimore.

Free safeties — John Lynch, Denver.

Specialists

Punter — Shaw Luchini, Oakland.

Kick returner — Adam Vinatieri, New England.

Pick-six specialist — Terrence

Special teamer — Larry Izzo, New England.

National Football Conference

Offense

Wide receivers — Joe Horn, New Orleans; Mahan, Miami; Marvin Harrison, Cincinnati; Terrell Owens, Philadelphia; Jason Walker, Green Bay.

Tackles — Orlando Pace, St. Louis; Walter Jones, Seattle; Tra Thomas, Philadelphia.

Guards — Alan Faneca, Dallas; Marco Rivera, Cleveland; Mike Mathison, Carolina; Trent Owens, Philadelphia; Jason Walker, Green Bay.

Centers — Clint Kuzma, Chicago; Matt Birk, Minnesota.

Tight ends — Alge Culpmer, Atlanta; Jason Witten, Dallas.

Quarterbacks — Daunte Culpepper, Minnesota; Tom Brady, New England; Michael Vick, Atlanta.

Running backs — Shaun Alexander, Seattle; Tiki Barber, New York Giants; Shaun Alexander, Seattle.

Fullback — William Henderson, Green Bay.

Defense

Ends — Bertrand Berry, Atlanta; Patrick Kerney, Atlanta; Julius Peppers, Carolina.

Interior linemen — La'Roi Glover, Dallas; Shaun Rogers, Detroit; Mike Williams, Minnesota.

Outside linebackers — Keith Brooking, Atlanta; Derrick Brooks, Tampa Bay; Marcus Stroud, Jacksonville.

Inside linebackers — Dan Morgan, Carolina; Jeremiah Trotter, Philadelphia.

Cornerbacks — Reggie Barber, Tampa Bay; Dre' Biv, Detroit; Lito Sheppard, Philadelphia.

Strong safety — Michael Lewis, Philadelphia; Ray Williams, Dallas.

Free safety — Brian Dawkins, Philadelphia; Ray Williams, Dallas.

Specialists

Punter — Mike Newberry, New Orleans.

Placekicker — David Akers, Philadelphia.

Kick returner — Eddie Drummond, Philadelphia.

Special teamer — Ike Reese, Philadelphia.

lor, Mike Singletary and Reggie White — who have won a Super Bowl, Defensive Player of the Year and eight straight trips to Hawaii.

"You take it in stride," Brooks said. "We're in a different position. You always want to be humbled by the selection, don't want it to take away from the goal at hand... I'm still at the top of my game. I appreciate the league recognizes that."

Two consistent Pro Bowlers, Vikings wide receiver Randy Moss and Bears linebacker Brian Urlacher, did not make it, mostly because of injuries. Also absent were such frequent Pro Bowl choices as cornerback Ray B. Brett Favre, St. Louis RB Marshall Faulk, Philadelphia DE Jason Keesee and Oakland CB Charles Woodson.

Curtis Martin, the league's leading rusher with 1,511 yards, was one of three Jets chosen, joining

defensive end John Abraham and center Kevin Mawae. Martin is having one of the best seasons of a 10-year career in which he has rushed for at least 1,000 yards each time.

"It feels good, especially at this point like turning back," he said. "There are so many other good talented running backs in the NFL, some of whom I feel have much more talent than I do. I've chosen over some of them, it feels good."

The other AFC running back was San Diego's LaDainian Tomlinson.

The other NFC runners were Shaun Alexander of Seattle and Adrian Green of Green Bay.

John McNabb and the NFC quarterbacks were Michael Vick of Atlanta and Daunte Culpepper of Minnesota. Cleveland and San Francisco had no players selected.

Dolphins offer LSU's Saban head coaching job

The Associated Press

DAVIE, Fla. — Nick Saban took over LSU's struggling football program five years ago and delivered a championship team.

NFL briefs

The Miami Dolphins hope he'll do the same for them.

Miami offered its coaching job Wednesday to Saban, the favorite for the position since Dave Wannstedt resigned last month. Saban told LSU athletic director Skip Bertman he might need until Friday to decide whether to take over one of the NFL's worst teams.

"I know he wants to make as quick a decision as he can," Bertman said Thursday. "But there's no pressure on him to make a fast one, certainly none from the university. So he should think things through."

"The question is: Does he stay here and continue to build, or does he take on a new challenge?"

Saban has previously said he'd prefer to handle a situation resolved by Christmas Day, when LSU travels to Orlando for its bowl game against Iowa.

A Dolphins source, speaking on condi-

NFL injury update

Injuries to prominent NFL players, followed by team's prognosis. (See Page 41 for complete injury report.)

Ben Roethlisberger (knee) out for rest of season. **QB Carson Palmer** (knee) questionable.

Ben Roethlisberger (knee) out for rest of season. **QB Carson Palmer** (knee) questionable.

tion of anonymity, confirmed that Saban's agent, Jimmy Sexton, and team owner Wayne Huizenga met Wednesday. Huizenga confirmed the offer in a one-sentence statement.

Sexton did not return phone calls to his office or cell phone.

The answering machine at Saban's home in Baton Rouge, La., was full.

Saban has been courted as an NFL coach for nearly a decade. He was approached previously by at least five teams, including a year ago by Atlanta and Chicago, but turned down every offer.

He was the first of three candidates the Dolphins interviewed.

Former Oakland Raiders coach Art Shell interviewed Monday, and interim Miami coach Jim Bates met with Huizenga on Tuesday.

Bates, preparing the Dolphins for Sun-

day's game against Cleveland, declined to discuss the situation Thursday.

"When I started this job, the main focus was to prepare this team to win games, to improve this team, to give them a positive note going out in a tough year with everything that has taken place," Bates said. "That is still my objective."

Bates is 2-3 since taking over as interim coach.

Seahawks WR Robinson returns after four-game suspension

KIRKLAND, Wash. — Koren Robinson said all the right things Wednesday, insisting he has learned his lesson.

"It was a learning experience," the Seattle Seahawks receiver said after returning from a four-game suspension for violating the NFL's substance-abuse rules. "Don't put yourself in certain situations or stuff like that can happen."

Coach Mike Holmgren was vague about what role Robinson will play Sunday when Arizona (5-9) visits Seattle in a game that is key to the postseason prospects for both teams. The Seahawks (7-7) can secure a playoff spot with a victory.

"I haven't really decided, to be honest

with you," Holmgren said, adding that Robinson probably will split time with Jerry Rice. "Hopefully, we can keep them both fresh that way. We need both of them to make plays."

Dallas sticking with Testaverde at QB

IRVING, Texas — Bill Parcells still thinks Vinny Testaverde gives the Dallas Cowboys the best chance to win, so he's keeping the 41-year-old quarterback as his starter.

But Parcells might not stick with Testaverde throughout Sunday's game against the Washington Redskins.

Parcells said Wednesday he's told Tony Romo to be ready to take the first snaps of his two-year NFL career. Parcells is giving Romo "quite a bit of additional work" with the first team in practice this week.

"I'm preparing two guys to play," Parcells said.

Left out of the equation is highly touted rookie Drew Henderson, who was dropped in third-string last week and will struggle this week working with the scout team. Parcells said Henson might play the finale against the New York Giants.

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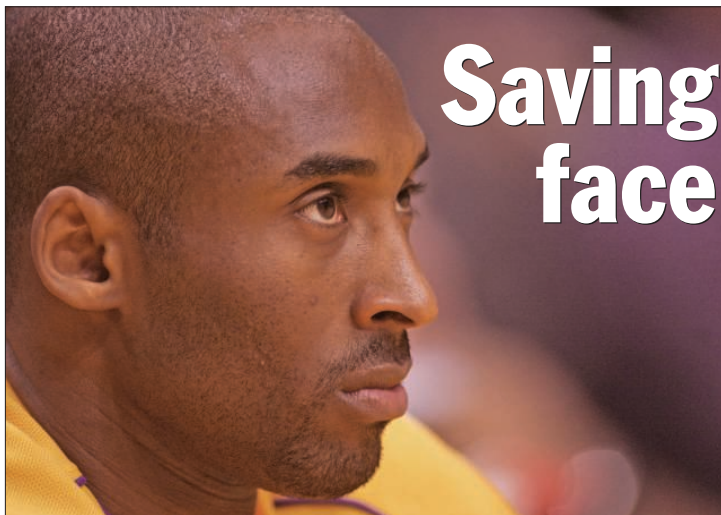
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SPORTS



Dolphins offer coaching job to LSU's Saban, Page 42



Saving face

From court-side brawls to courtroom battles, NBA's image needs a boost after ugly 2004

By NANCY ARMOUR

The Associated Press

At least the "Bad Boys" kept their shenanigans on the court when they were wreaking havoc in the NBA.

Nowadays there are enough mug shots out there to spawn a new trading card industry. Players are doing and saying things that defy common sense, annoying fans with their high-priced whines.

Wins seem to rank only slightly ahead of endorsement opportunities and monster contracts, and those "knuckleheads" Karl Malone once dissed haven't gotten a clue yet.

Even the Christmas Day games, once a showcase for the class of the league, have attitude. One game is Kobe vs. Shaq, dueling egos that helped bring down what could have been the NBA's next dynasty.

The other is the first meeting of the Pistons and Pacers since that Nov. 19 brawl that spilled into the stands, one of the ugliest fights in sports history.

What happened to all that love and goodwill created by Michael, Magic and Bird?

"People don't realize the things we do as players can really affect a lot of lives," said Antonio Davis, first vice president of the players union. "We're not trying to take away their own sense of self. If



AP photos

The NBA's image has taken some hits this year, starting with a sexual assault trial against Lakers star Kobe Bryant, top. Police had to use a stun gun on the Timberwolves Michael Olowokandi, above, when he refused to leave an Indianapolis bar last month. The Nuggets' Carmelo Anthony, right, was in a bar fight, briefly charged with marijuana possession and seen on a homemade DVD where a man warns that people who snitch on drug dealers get "a hole in their head."

"You just can't do some of those things."

"But regardless of what organization, corporation you work for, you can't go out and have run-ins with the law, hurt the people that drive your business," Davis said.

"Like everything else in society, the NBA goes through cycles."

This latest one seems to be driven, largely, by the influx of younger players. The average age in the league has dropped by almost a year, down from 27.82 in 1998 to



27.028 this year.

More and more kids are jumping straight from high school to the pros — a record eight were taken in last summer's draft, all in the first round — and those who do go to college rarely stay all four years.

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No. 1 Illini hang on to win 'Braggin' Rights'

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Jacobs helps lead Bowling Green's blowout in GMAC

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Drew, Dodgers reach five-year, \$55 million agreement

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